

Coping with cultural differences: The development of generic capabilities in logistics graduates.

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the degree of Doctor of Education

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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PUBLICATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	8
LIST OF FIGURES	10
ABSTRACT	11
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	15
Background to the Research	15
Research Aims	16
Justification for the Research	17
Methodology	19
Structure of Thesis	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
Definitions and Dimensions of Culture	22
Globalisation and Generic Capabilities	27
Cross-Cultural Organisational Management	30
Organisational Knowledge Management	34
Which Generic Capabilities Should be Developed	36
Conclusion	46
Research Questions and Hypotheses	47
CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1	49
Introduction	49
Research Paradigm	49
Methodology	52
Research Strategy	54
Selection of Cases	56
Validity	59
Data Collection	61
Data Analysis	63

Ethical Considerations	65
Limitations	65
Case Studies	66
Case Study 1: ALTIC International	66
Case Study 2: Hogan and Wilson PL	75
Comparisons between Case Study 1 and Case Study 2	77
Case Study 3: Benedict Transport Company	79
Case Study 4: Cranston Transport Services	87
Comparisons between Case Study 3 and Case Study 4	91
Case Study 5: McCabe Logistics	92
Case Study 6: Darragh Global Services	98
Comparisons between Case Study 5 and Case Study 6	101
Case Study 7: Harrington Holdings	103
Case Study 8: Greythorpe Consultants	110
Comparisons between Case Study 7 and Case Study 8	116
Findings	118
Summary	120
CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2	122
Logistic Undergraduate Programs at RMIT	122
Research Paradigm	123
Methodology	124
Participants	124
Demographic Details	127
Instrument: The Generic Capabilities Questionnaire	128
Procedure	129
Internal and External Validity	130
Statistical Methods	130
Results	131
Data Screening	131
Demographic Results	132

Summary of Data Screening	132
Participants' Attitude to Employment	133
Graduates' Perception of Work Environment	135
Generic Capabilities Content of RMIT Logistics Program	137
Additional Generic Capabilities Required in the Program	138
Generic Capabilities Not Required in the Program	138
Graduates' Ranking of Generic Capabilities	139
Graduates' General Comments on the RMIT Logistics Program	139
Discussion of Findings	144
Findings Relating to Research Hypotheses	144
Limitations	151
Implications of Study 2 Research Findings	153
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	155
Summary of Findings of Study 1 and Study 2	159
Implications for Theory	161
Implications for Practice	163
Implications for Pedagogy	166
Further Research Projects	169
Conclusion	170
REFERENCES	172
APPENDIX 3.1 Cross-Cultural Management Interview Questions	185
APPENDIX 3.2 Conceptual Matrix	187
APPENDIX 3.3 Plain Language Letter-Interview Participants	189
APPENDIX 4.1 Generic Capabilities Questionnaire	190
APPENDIX 4.2 Plain Language Letter –Survey	196

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Generic Skills Required for Competitive Enterprises	39
Table 2.2	Employability Skills Framework	40
Table 2.3	Comparison of Suggested Cross-Cultural Generic Capabilities- Tung (1996), Lloyd and Hartel (2003), and Chang and Tharenou (2004)	41
Table 2.4	Competencies for Managing Differences Abroad	42
Table 2.5	Elements of Key Competencies (DeSeCo, 2002)	43
Table 3.1	Basic Beliefs of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms	51
Table 3.2	Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies	54
Table 3.3	Case Study Comparisons	58
Table 3.4	Profile of Interviewees	62
Table 3.5	Generic Capabilities Rankings by Dir HR and VP Log of ALTIC International (Asia Pacific)	71
Table 3.6	ALTIC Behavioral Competencies	72
Table 3.7	Generic Capabilities Ranking by Dir Log, Asia Distribution Centre, of Hogan & Wilson	77
Table 3.8	Generic Capabilities Rankings by GM and MD of Benedict	86
Table 3.9	Generic Capabilities Ranking by Dir, Cranston Transport Services	90
Table 3.10	Generic Capabilities Ranking by Dir Fin of Darragh Global Services	100
Table 3.11	Generic Capabilities Ranking by GM HR of Harrington	108
Table 3.12	Generic Capabilities Rankings by MGR HR and JC of Greythorpe	114
Table 3.13	Analysis of Paired-Case Generic Rankings by Logistic Managers	118
Table 3.14	Analysis of Paired-Case Generic Rankings by HR Managers	119
Table 3.15	Analysis of Paired-Case Generic Rankings by MDs and Dir Fin	119
Table 4.1	Survey Response Rates	125

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics: Australian and Asian Graduates	126
Table 4.3 Omnibus Multivariate between Group Tests (Australian versus Asian Graduates) on Attitudes towards Employment	134
Table 4.4 Significant Between-Subjects Effects (Australian versus Asian): Mean Scores and SD	135
Table 4.5 Order (by Size of Loadings) in which Variables Contribute to Factor 1: Work Environment; Supervisor Attributes	136
Table 4.6 Graduates' Rating of Logistics Program Coverage of Generic Capabilities	137
Table 4.7 Additional Generic Capabilities Required (by Cohort)	138
Table 4.8 Graduates' Ranking of Generic Capabilities	139
Table 4.9 Co-Occurrence of 10 Top Ranked Concepts with the RMIT Logistics Program	140
Table 4.10 Attributes Derived from an Analysis of Text Summaries	141

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Corporate Images	32
Figure 3.1	Flow of Naturalistic Inquiry	53
Figure 4.1	Participant Numbers by Year of Completion and Ethnic Background	124
Figure 5.1	Relationships between Theory, Pedagogy, and Practice	161

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates development of generic capabilities in an RMIT undergraduate logistics degree program, and had its genesis in work carried out between 1997 and 1999, as part of the Australian Technology Network (ATN) (2000) project on *Generic Capabilities of ATN University Graduates*. Generic capabilities are those general graduate attributes that are not specifically discipline-focused, examples being communication and teamwork skills. Useful as this previous work was for the ATN report, a major limitation was that it focused on undergraduate students' cultural relationships and capabilities rather than on graduates' views, and relied on input from only one employer.

A major research objective of this thesis is the extent to which graduates perceived that generic capabilities were developed in their RMIT logistics undergraduate program, specifically in a cross-cultural context spanning a range of organisations differing in size and ownership structure. Linking generic capabilities, organisational structure and culture, and managers' and graduates' opinions on the priorities accorded to individual generic capabilities was a different approach to that adopted in other cross-cultural studies and provided a level of rich data opening up several avenues of analysis apart from that relating to the main research objective.

Generic capabilities used as a benchmark for this investigation were derived from a list of key employability skills developed by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Business Council of Australia, in 2002. A further objective, necessary to provide a balanced analysis of this topic, was to investigate what managers considered to be the relative importance of generic capabilities, and how graduates they employed were expected to behave in the context of their organisational cultures. The present thesis involves two studies. Study 1 concerns the development of a series of qualitative organisational case studies using grounded theory methodology. Study 2 is a quantitative survey of 31 Australian and 25 Asian (Singapore and Hong Kong) logistic graduates from 1996 to 2002.

In Study 1, managers from eight organisations, ranging in size from multi-national to small public and private (family-owned) companies, were interviewed, and four major and four minor case studies developed. Initial analysis was based on comparative studies of pairs of cases displaying similar predominant cultural and organisational characteristics. For example, case studies 1 and 2 compared two large multi-national organisations, each with a global network, but with different perspectives on generic capabilities importance. One organization, based in Hong Kong, was much older than the other, and placed more emphasis on problem solving in a regulatory framework and less on initiative and enterprise, whilst the other, a Singapore-based organization founded in 1972 and operating in a volatile logistics environment, expected its managers to display considerable initiative and enterprise in solving problems which were often unique. Case studies 3 and 4 analyzed business expectations in two large, Australian, family-owned companies. Case studies 5 and 6 compared management styles in a large Australian family company operating internationally with those of a privately-owned multi-national organization based in Hong Kong. Case studies 7 and 8 examined the impact of senior managers as charismatic leaders in two Australian companies, one a large international logistics organization, and the other a small international consulting firm.

Generic capabilities rankings in different organisations varied, depending on whether managers being interviewed were operational or human resource management specialists, but there was general agreement that communication, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, and teamwork skills were highest priority. Two other important issues raised by the case studies relate to organisation, culture within organisations, and in the transport and logistic industry itself. There is an expectation in family companies, where a close relationship exists between management and employees, that graduates will conform to a business family behavior pattern, and disappointment when this does not happen, usually because graduates' expectations are far more specific, with business and personal issues being seen as quite separate worlds. The other issue is the transport and logistic industry's rather negative attitude to employment of women graduates in operational management positions, where industrial relationships, on a manager/driver/warehouse-operator basis, are seen as posing potential problems. A further area identified as deserving far more attention in most of the organisations studied is that of knowledge management. One particular multi-national organisation has Country Offices

established throughout Asia and the South Pacific regions, each office staffed by employees with an intimate knowledge of local culture and business conditions, and yet no formal knowledge transfer arrangement exists to disseminate that knowledge throughout the whole organisation.

Study 2 results indicate that the views of both Asian and Australian graduates are in line with management rankings which identify communication, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, and teamwork skills as the most important generic capabilities. These rankings are consistent with those reported by Australian and OECD government and industry research organisations. Both graduate groups agree that generic capabilities are covered in the RMIT logistic program, but ratings are generally in an "adequate" to "good" range, with no outstanding features. An open-ended question culminated in a number of significant comments and, although cultural diversity in the student body is seen as a major benefit, there are little data indicating a high level of Australian and Asian student networking, and a number of respondents are critical of a lack of international focus in the present program. A major issue is a need for more emphasis on presentation and problem-solving skills so graduates are able to carry through a project from initiation to completion. Initiative and enterprise skill development also attracted negative criticism. Asian graduates' attitude to employment differs significantly to that of Australian graduates in communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills areas, and to a lesser extent in initiative and enterprise skills. However, there is a nonsignificant difference in both groups' attitudes towards their work environment.

Implications for the RMIT logistics program are threefold: educational, professional, and research-oriented. Educationally, the program needs to develop more of an international focus, and not to be so Australia-centric. Although this point has been acknowledged in the past, it still appears to be a problem. Australian and Asian student networking was not raised as a major issue in this survey as the research focus was not on this specific point, but there are indications in a small number of graduate comments that it needs further research. Professionally, comments by senior management of a large Australian private company operating in the national market about their problem with attitudes of new graduates indicate an imbalance between graduates' expectations of a specific, job-related relationship, and family employers' belief that a closer, more diffuse model fits the business family concept. This, and industry attitudes on

women managers in operational line appointments, are industrial relations aspects that the RMIT logistics program does not cover, and consideration must be given to how some elements of logistics industry culture, in addition to discipline-specific content, can be included in the program. These areas, relating as they do to organisational culture and structure were not addressed in the *ATN Generic Capabilities* report. Although the relative immaturity of the RMIT/Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade logistic program precluded its inclusion in this research, a major research requirement in future will be to investigate these joint arrangements from a cultural and professional perspective, and to develop formal, two-way knowledge transfer arrangements which do not exist at present.

The single most important finding emanating from this research is that, regardless of the level and responsibilities of management, and the structure, size and culture of organisations, the most important generic capabilities are communication, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, and teamwork skills. RMIT logistics graduates' survey responses indicate strongly that more emphasis must be placed on developing these specific skills if young managers are to realize their full potential in an increasingly demanding and competitive international marketplace.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

This thesis investigates the development of generic capabilities in an RMIT undergraduate logistics degree program. Current research has its genesis in work carried out between 1997 and 1999, as part of the Australian Technology Network (ATN) (2000) project on *Generic Capabilities of ATN University Graduates* (Christopherson, 2002). Although the earlier research provided useful and relevant input for the ATN Report (2000), a limitation of the findings was that they were based on data gathered from students rather graduates, and from the input of only one employer (i.e., BHP, 1997).

Generic capabilities, defined as graduate attributes that *go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge* (ATN, 2000, p.iii), are necessary attributes for higher education students *being prepared for a future which is largely unknown* (Bowden & Marton, 1998). Much of this uncertainty about the future arises because of globalisation, driven by rapidly changing information technology, an increasingly mobile workforce, and government policy initiatives in developed and developing countries (Dunphy & Stace, 1990; EPAC, 1995). These factors have led to global networking of business organisations (Labayan, 1998) and changes in information transfer (Griffel, 2003). Hofstede (1996) commented that, for internationalisation to succeed, both business and management theories must change. Similarly, Stace (1997) stressed the importance of changing culture and skill sets if success in the international market was to be achieved. The terms *globalisation* and *internationalisation* tend to be used as though both have the same meaning (Walsh, 1985). These constructs are defined in Chapter 2.

As a consequence of changing culture and skill sets, managers now must be able to work in culturally-diverse, international environments, and be prepared to cope with cultural diversity in domestic markets (Tung, 1996). Therefore culture, particularly differences between Western and

Asian cultures, as well as organisational structures, is a broad, overarching theme for this thesis, providing a basis for the immediate focus, the development of generic capabilities.

Research Aims

This thesis aims to establish the extent to which an RMIT logistics degree program addresses development of generic capabilities in Australian and Asian undergraduate students. Two generic nationality designators, Australian and Asian, were chosen because, during most of the period under review, this logistics program was offered only in Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. This thesis addresses three questions: What are the gaps in the present program? Is there a difference between Australian and Asian graduates' views of the generic capabilities program? Are there differences in Australian and Asian employers' views of priorities of generic capabilities expected of graduates? There are three research objectives:

Objective 1: *To establish a priority of generic capabilities that employers expect graduates to be able to demonstrate when they are employed in either national or international logistics organisations.* There are two reasons for this objective. First, it is important to determine, from an employer's viewpoint, what are the most important generic capabilities; and second, and an extension of the first reason, it is important to know whether Australian and Asian employers have different perceptions of the priority of generic capabilities. Answers to these questions will provide a contextual framework of a generic capabilities program suitable for Australian and Asian students.

Objective 2: *To investigate influences of organisational culture and structure on companies' views of the relative importance of individual generic capabilities.* This research objective links three organisational characteristics: culture, structure; and, as part of structure, ownership status of organisations. Culture can be either national or organisational, or an amalgam of both; structure person- or task-oriented in small, medium, or large organisations; and ownership can be either private (family) or public. This three-dimensional model provides a more detailed framework for investigating Objective 2 than does a model based only on structural and cultural orientations.

Objective 3: *To assess the adequacy of the coverage of generic capabilities in an RMIT logistics undergraduate program.* This assessment is based on a survey of Australian and Asian logistic graduates from 1996 to 2002. This survey is more extensive and focused than the generic capabilities section of a Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), and provides data on three aspects of the logistics degree generic capabilities development program. First, it indicates to what extent graduates felt the program satisfied generic capability requirements that they have identified from their work experience. Second, graduates' rankings of generic capabilities provide a comparison with similar data from employers (Objective 2). Finally, the present survey provides graduates with opportunities to suggest which additional capabilities should be included in a logistics program, and to provide a general opinion of the RMIT logistics undergraduate generics capability program as a whole.

Justification for the Research

Justification for this research is based on two premises which are argued in this section. They are:

- **Premise 1:** Development of graduate generic capabilities is important for graduates, and the economic, social, and political welfare of their countries.
- **Premise 2:** Logistic graduates, because of the universal application of the principles of their discipline to international trade and commerce, must be able to work in national, international, or global organisations involving multicultural teams, as a matter of course. Generic capabilities development programs in higher education institutions must allow for the global nature of the logistics discipline, and for an increasing emphasis on supply chain collaboration across national and cultural boundaries.

Since 1985 there have been a number of studies commenting on the need for a focus, in university curricula, on development of generic capabilities. Australian studies of most relevance for this thesis are Australian Education Council [the Mayer Report] (1992), Bowden and Masters (1993), Karpin (1995), AC Nielsen (2000), and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Business Council of Australia (ACCI/BCA) (2002). These studies highlight

government and employers' concerns about graduates' deficiencies in communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, and a need to develop, within the Australian formal education system, opportunities to expose students to an enterprising culture. Hager, Holland, and Beckett (2002) also noted the increasing demand from business for graduates with appropriate generic skills, pointing out that such skills have been brought into higher profile by economic, educational, and technological factors. These skills are essential in an international marketplace. It is noteworthy that recently Volet (2004) stressed the education sector's responsibility in the internationalisation area when she highlighted an urgency for developing and achieving internationalisation goals that would enhance higher education quality.

From an economic viewpoint, the importance of Australian industry and managements' ability to compete in a global market was noted by Evans (2001). He pointed out that 60% of Australia's trade was with East Asia, and *hundreds of thousands of Australian jobs depend on those Asian markets* (p. 8). Within an international context, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report (DeSeCo, 2003), noted that major pressures for improvement in key competencies had come from the business sector, in order to improve productivity, minimize unemployment, and encourage innovation. However, that report also commented that *from a broader social perspective, knowledge, skills, and competencies are important because of their contributions outside the domain of economics and work* (DeSeCo, 2003, p. 2).

Graduate capabilities development is a critical requirement for logistics graduates. Over the previous decade, the concept of logistics management as a discipline has extended well beyond the boundaries of a single organisation. Logistics management is involved with planning, implementing, and controlling efficient, effective forward and reverse flow and storage of goods, services, and related information, between points of origin and points of consumption in order to meet customers' requirements (Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals [CSCMP], 2005). World-class logistics has transformed into global supply chain management (SCM), involving close working relationships with customers and suppliers (Stank, Keller, & Daugherty, 2001). As out-sourcing of goods and services in a global economy is forecast to continue rising (Buck Consultants International, 2002), most of the SCM operations that logistic managers will encounter will have an international, and diverse-cultural, component. Such a business

environment points to a pressing need for well-developed generic capabilities in communication and interpersonal skills.

Another aspect of SCM that is increasing in importance is knowledge management, especially of tacit knowledge. That is, implicit knowledge within organisations that is not collated in company documentation but resides within individual managers. Callender (2003) commented that knowledge management and SCM were both emerging knowledge areas, and that knowledge management has a *propensity* to become a valuable competitive aid in SCM. In view of this potential competitive advantage, an ability within organisations to share tacit knowledge becomes very important, and communication across national and cultural boundaries an essential factor in knowledge management arrangements.

For these reasons, it is argued that this research is important not only from a graduate perspective, but also in the implications that the findings of this investigation will have for educational and industry sectors.

Methodology

For the purposes of the present thesis, a mixed model approach was employed. Study 1 investigates Research Objectives 1 and 2. As the emphasis in Study 1 is on processes, meanings not experimentally measured, and reality in a social context, a qualitative approach was adopted (Silverman, 2005). A case study methodology is used because questions address *how* and *why* issues over which the present investigator has no influence, and because they focus on contemporary events (Yin, 2003).

Study 2 is concerned with Research Objective 3, and involves a cross sectional survey design (Neuman, 2003). Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to analyze survey data *to elaborate or develop analysis, providing richer detail* (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 41). Testing of hypotheses, however, is chiefly by quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis involves a further four chapters. Chapter 2 provides an in depth literature review, relevant to research objectives, and issues relating to culture, globalization, cross-cultural management, knowledge management, and development of generic capabilities. Research questions and hypotheses derived during the review of literature, and gaps identified in contemporary literature, are also examined.

Chapters 3 and 4 report Studies 1 and 2 respectively. These chapters each have a similar structure. Following an introduction, research paradigms and methodology are described, and reasons for the particular methodology justified. Data collection and analysis methods are reported, and findings discussed. In this thesis, methodology for each chapter has been discussed separately as each study involves unique features. Chapter 5 is a conclusion chapter, summarizing key findings, discussing conclusions emanating from a combination of Study 1 and Study 2 findings, and making recommendations for theory, pedagogy, practice, and further research.

In conclusion, this research investigates both graduate and employer attitudes towards development and priority of graduate generic capabilities. Three research objectives were developed. The following chapter reviews literature relevant to these objectives.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews current literature relevant to those research objectives outlined in Chapter 1, and concentrates on integrating and discussing literature on generic capabilities, in an organisational structure and cross-cultural context, rather than in a purely academic setting.

Two major underlying factors are important in this research. First, how culture differs in international (domestic and foreign markets addressed separately and differently) and multinational (many companies producing similar commodities) organisations (Adler, 2002) and, second, whether individual generic capabilities vary in different cultural contexts. Definitions and dimensions of culture are considered initially, followed by a review of literature concerning cultural influences on organisational management.

As pointed out in Chapter 1, knowledge management in supply chain operations is a valuable tool for global competition (Callender, 2003), and influences how organisations deal with culturally-diverse customers. Different customer service policies impact, in turn, on the relative importance of specific generic capabilities needed to manage in a globalised environment. For this reason, literature relating to globalization and organisational learning is examined.

Focus for the final part of the literature review is the identification and development of generic capabilities, a core theme in this thesis. This discussion draws on Australian, European, and United Kingdom literature, in the contexts of organisational culture, structure and ownership, and national or international market orientation. The complexity of broader graduate attributes theory, which varies depending on whether cultural sensitivity, personal attributes, or employability skills is principle criterion for selection, is also considered. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of gaps in present research, and summarizes research questions and hypotheses forming bases for qualitative and quantitative studies described in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

Definitions and Dimensions of Culture

This section reviews literature on definitions and dimensions of organisational culture, a parent discipline-field for this research, and on development of generic capabilities, an immediate discipline-field (Phillips & Pugh, 1994). Differences between Australian and Asian business cultures are an important part of this research, and this aspect is covered in detail. Contemporary researchers' views on cultural diversity, and on knowledge management in cross-cultural environments, are also discussed as this links with concepts of globalisation, a subject of the following section.

Culture's impact on business management has attracted considerable comment, the most relevant authors from the perspective of this investigation being: Hall, (1959), Hofstede, (1980); Schein, (1992), Redding, (1993), Biggs, (1993), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, (2002), Adler, (2002), Holden, (2002), Schneider & Barsoux, (2003), and Tayeb, (2003). An early definition of culture (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952) emphasized the importance of explicit and implicit patterns of behavior developed and transmitted by symbols. Hall (1959) also used implicit and explicit concepts of culture in his proposed theory of High Context/Low Context culture. In high context cultures such as China, much interpersonal communication is implicit rather than explicit because of cultural conditioning of participants. Consequently, an explicit part of communication might be brief in relation to the content it actually conveys. In low context cultures, such as those of Western Europe, Australia, and the United States, most communication is explicit, and much less reliance is placed on implicit, culturally-coded signals.

Culture is generally agreed to have three main characteristics: it is learned by members of groups rather than being innate; different aspects of culture such as symbols, artifacts, and assumptions are interrelated; and, because it is shared, it acts as a demarcation boundary between one cultural group and another (Hall, 1981). The possibility of cultural boundaries altering over time raises issues of whether cultural change can occur, and if so, how. While Lakomski (2001) noted that culture was both variable and stable, Ferraro (2006) asserted that cultures are continually changing, mostly by characteristics of one culture diffusing into another culture. Such change is more likely to occur when a recipient culture perceives a new cultural model as better than the

existing one, and not inconsistent with present cultural patterns. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) disagreed that culture is fixed about a number of static value orientations, and so partly rejected Lakomski's (2001) argument. Their view was that culture moved from one preferred position to another, and that many existing studies, including Hofstede (1980), implied that one cultural category excluded the opposite category. A better position, they argued was that *we believe that one cultural category seeks to "manage" its opposite and that value dimensions self-organise in systems to generate new meanings* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2002, p. 27).

There are a number of similarities between Hall's (1959) theory of cultural coding and Hofstede's (1980) definition of culture as an implicit characteristic of groups in the sense that it is collective programming of the mind. In his initial research, Hofstede (1980) noted four dimensions of national cultural difference: uncertainty avoidance demonstrated by how people react to ambiguity; masculinity/femininity in the terms of whether assertive or softer traits are evident in a culture; power distance shown by how power difference between individuals is accepted; and whether individual or collective decision making is the norm. A fifth dimension, added later, related to whether particular cultural groups viewed the future in terms of long- or short-term time orientation.

Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of culture are widely cited in literature on cultural differences because, as Holden (2002) pointed out, these dimensions have attained the status of an unassailable paradigm. However Holden criticized the general, non-questioning acceptance of Hofstede's results on the grounds that this research was done three decades ago, and that the world had changed greatly since then. Tayeb (2003) noted that other critics of Hofstede have commented on a lack of assessment of the influence of an IBM culture, as distinct from national culture, on Hofstede's results (Søndergaard, 1994); on Hofstede's concentration on IBM employees' values, which did not take into account external factors (Pugh, 1995); and on an oversimplification of national culture based on an averaging of responses from participants (Tayeb, 1988; Pugh, 1995). Nevertheless, Mead (1998) asserted that the depth and practical value of Hofstede's (1980) research should not be ignored, a position supported by Tayeb's (1988) study of Indian and United Kingdom businesses. This study used a combination of both

Hofstede's (1980) questions and new questions, identifying similar dimensions as shown in Hofstede's (1980) earlier work (Tayeb, 2003).

Defining national cultures by attaching specific attributes to them is a common thread through much of the literature. In their definition of culture, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) noted six value orientations: relationship with nature (subjugation, harmony, mastery); time orientation (past, present, future); human nature (good, bad, mixed); activity orientation (being, controlling, doing); human relationship (individual, family, group); and space orientation (private, public, mixed), arguing that problems facing mankind are universal. This set of value orientations features prominently in later research.

Schein (1992), for example, defined culture in terms of basic assumptions accepted by a group, and handed on to new group members as the correct way to behave and solve problems. His definition implied three levels of organisational culture: artifacts or symbols, accepted values, and tacit assumptions representing basic underlying beliefs which he considered to be the essence of culture. Whether or not large organisations could have single cultures therefore depended on the extent to which tacit assumptions were shared across all elements of those organisations.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) agreed with Schein's (1992) approach, arguing that basic assumptions, governing the way a problem has been solved over time and so has become an automatic response, defined meanings that groups shared and accepted. This position formed the basis for their view that a culture best able to survive was one that was flexible enough to reconcile opposing values (e.g., good/bad, individual/collective, high context/low context). These investigators suggested a set of dimensions governing relationships between people: universalism versus particularism (rules versus relationships); communitarianism versus individualism (group versus individual); neutral versus emotional (range of feelings expressed); diffuse versus specific (the range of involvement); achievement versus ascription (how status is accorded); and time management in terms of past, present and future.

The extent to which situational and environmental contexts (Hall, 1959), and cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980), influence Asian cultures is considered by commentators (Redding, 1993; Biggs, 1994; Siu, 1997) to be influenced by a Confucian tradition which stressed the importance of respect for duty, loyalty, education, hierarchical structure, age, seniority, and collective rather than individual interest (Lasserre & Schütte, 1995; Seligman, 1997; Meissner, 1999). In discussing difficulties that international students experience in Western education systems, Biggs (1994) used the term Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) to describe the background of many Asian students, and pointed out that, although such students might do well academically, problems of dealing with culture shock tended to make them stay in their own ethnic groups. This reaction to foreign environments occurred because students had been conditioned by the collectivistic nature of their tradition.

Redding (1993) noted four sets of rules that applied to business relationships in a CHC society. These rules governed relationships, work ethics, social networks, and fundamental Confucian values, creating a hierarchical, paternalistic business philosophy differing from Western business management styles. Hall (1981) compared organisational and management characteristics in high and low context situations and found that, in high context cultures, managers are held personally responsible for what their subordinates do. By contrast, in low context cultures, responsibility for subordinates' actions is more difficult to identify because it is delegated throughout organisations. Employees in different contexts also respond differently, with high context cultures being creative in established systems but having difficulties with new problems; while in low context cultures, employees are innovative and accept new challenges but can become non-imaginative when working on routine tasks.

These differences in organisational management styles, and employee behavior, are reflected in Schneider and Barsoux's (2003) concept that organisational models are based on either controlling or adapting structures. Organisations based on a controlling structure model exhibit high context characteristics, being centralized and formalized, with strong top down management, and clear lines of authority. Such organisations are also more likely to display high power distance and collective characteristics. High context environments can be created by ownership culture as well as by national culture. For example, the characteristics of family

businesses such as management control by family members, and a sense of family values being embedded in business procedures (Fletcher, 2002), are more likely to be found in high context, controlling environments. However, organisations based on an adapting model are more decentralized, responsibility is diffused, and flexibility in an uncertain environment is important. Hence a low context culture is more likely to prevail, and such organisations would conform to an individualistic, low power distance model.

Although structural and hierarchical models, such as those developed by Hofstede (1980), Redding (1993), and Biggs (1994), have become accepted paradigms for cross-cultural management relationships between Western and Asian cultures, a number of researchers have taken issue with aspects of these models. For example, Siu (1997) argued that culture is neither timeless nor durable, and pointed out that in Hong Kong (HK), traditional Confucian family values had been blended with, amongst other things, respect for individual initiative. Culture has become *an arena for dialogue and improvisation* (p. 2), and so it has been important for HK youth to continue to develop a broader cultural understanding. Similarly, Li (2001) described the views of the present generation of young Chinese managers who respected Confucian values, although not to the extent that their parents did, but who were much more individualistic and tolerant towards Western culture. Littrell (2002) analysed employee empowerment in China in the context of a case study of a group of hotels, noting that, as a result of research by Hofstede and others, most management theorists had discounted empowerment as a workable concept in Chinese organisations. However, his research indicated that if high power distance could be separated from autocratic management, and collectivism from resistance to change, employee empowerment was possible.

These definitions of culture, and of differences between high context and low context cultures, are relevant to attitudes of Australian and Asian graduates, and provide a basis for two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Australian and Asian graduates differ on their attitudes to work.*

Hypothesis 2: *Australian and Asian graduates differ on their views of their work environment.*

To conclude this section on definitions and dimensions of culture, contemporary views on attitudes to cultural diversity are examined. Holden (2002) claimed that present cultural management paradigms placed too much emphasis on negative aspects of cultural diversity, and did not recognise the value of cultural diversity in organisations. He described the current situation as a paradigmatic stand-off between knowledge management practitioners and culturalists, with the former not knowing how to handle culture as an organisational knowledge resource, and the latter not recognising it as such. Deresky (2006) agreed that knowledge is an important organisational resource, noting that, in joint venture arrangements, managing performance also required management of tacit knowledge residing in the various cultural areas of the organisation. This view is consistent with that of Cox (1994), who noted that a major factor in assessing relevance of cultural diversity to organisations was an increasing emphasis on globalisation and multinational operations.

Globalisation has emerged as one of the important influences on cultural change. Phillips and Sackman (2002) stressed that a successful manager in a global environment required an ability to handle multiple instances of cultural diversity, at a time when older paradigms of culture being confined by national boundaries were being challenged. These developments, and an increasingly culturally-diverse and mobile work force, have significant implications for managers in a global economy, the extent of which is reviewed in the next section.

Globalisation and Generic Capabilities

This section examines the influence of globalisation on management responsibilities, and on work force characteristics. Literature relating to the complexity of broader generic attributes, alluded to in the introduction to Chapter 2, is reviewed in terms of social, political, and economic influences on generic capability development. The section concludes with a discussion of the relationship of globalisation, generic capabilities and cross-cultural organisational management.

Globalisation has been defined as changes in information transfer (Griffel, 2003), and global networking of business organisations (Labayan, 1998), and covers a broad range of economic, social, and political influences. Lloyd (1995) noted that differences between globalisation and

internationalisation are not identical, the former being a more complex stage of the latter, involving economic and trade influences moving beyond national boundaries (Dicken, 1992) with consequent reshaping of cultures, and changing roles of nation states (Wells, Carnochan, Slayton, Allen, & Vasudeva, 1998). Kearney (1995), however, questioned whether these concepts differed substantially on policy issues (EPAC, 1995). The term *internationalisation* is more common in higher education curricula, and remains a feature of current academic debate (Hellstén & Prescott, 2004).

However, Volet and Ang (1998) criticized the degree to which academics appear not to have taken internationalisation seriously. This situation can be partly attributed to a negative impact of globalisation by its contribution to changes in the role and nature of universities, caused by the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) categorization of education as a service (Osborne, 2002). As a consequence, universities tended to focus more on specific vocational and professional programs in fields such as business management, at the expense of programs designed to develop generic capabilities.

Dunphy and Stace (1990) noted that the challenges globalisation posed for national education systems were, on the one hand, that information technologies had eliminated many middle management positions, resulting in a need for retraining more frequently as job categories changed. On the other hand, employees with skills in high demand were increasingly mobile, and moved relatively freely between national and international organisations. This latter characteristic, mobility of highly skilled workers, is an example of a trend that Albrow (2004) described as *worldwide institutional arrangements* (p. 119), allowing people to move easily across national boundaries.

Global job mobility has implications both for skilled workers, and for workers whose skills are not readily portable. Rodrik (2004) suggested that one reason for tension between globalisation and national social stability is that, for less skilled workers, globalisation brings two penalties. Less skilled workers cannot move across national boundaries because they are unlikely to be employable elsewhere. At the same time, their own employment might be at risk either from

workers in other countries because their employers have outsourced their functions, or from more-skilled foreign workers entering their own country.

A further effect of work force mobility, noted by Tung (1996), was that managers in domestic markets needed skills and core competencies which, previously, were associated with international, cross-cultural management. Factors driving this convergence, apart from globalisation and work force mobility, were information technology and organisational restructuring. Marx (1999, p.98) described the role of culture in organisations as *social glue*, pointing out that management style and organisational culture were linked.

Finally, while emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity in organisations, Hoecklin (1995) noted that successful understanding and management of national cultural differences were sources of considerable competitive advantage for organisations. Understanding and managing cultural diversity could take several forms. For example, Phillips and Sackman (2002) suggested that an emphasis should be placed on how to build on similarities rather than on finding ways to bridge differences in national cultures. However, Graen and Chun (1996) supported the establishment of a third culture which would form a basis for successful cross-cultural relationships. Such a third culture would be one that represented an amalgam of organisational practice and management style acceptable to all employees, regardless of national cultural affiliation. It is arguable that Graen and Chun's (1996) concept is more an expression of culturally sensitive management than of development of a new culture in the Schein (1992) model. However it does seem clear that understanding and managing cultural diversity requires management organisational skills with a high degree of cultural sensitivity.

This section has reviewed the impact of globalisation on the generic attributes managers need to operate in a global economy. The impact of globalisation on higher education, and the emphasis of political and economic aspects of curriculum, at the expense of social and academic objectives, has been noted. National culture change, discussed in the earlier section, was seen as being accelerated by increasing globalisation, placing more pressure on managers to be able to handle cultural diversity in multicultural work forces.

How managers meet this new challenge, whether by building on similarities, and maximizing the advantages of diversity, in national cultures, or by developing a new (third) culture, is open to question. Regardless of which approach is used, culturally-sensitive organisational management arrangements, and managers with the generic capabilities to put those arrangements into practice, are necessary. The first of these two elements, culturally-sensitive organisational management, is the subject of the next section.

Cross-Cultural Organisational Management

Culturally-sensitive organisational management has two dimensions. First, organisations must be aware of the cultural characteristics of their target markets (Adler, 2002); and second, organisational structures must fit with organisational culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). Literature relating to both these dimensions is reviewed in this section.

Australian industry's orientation towards global business was the subject of the Karpin Report (1995) which recommended that, to match world's best practice, industry needed to lift its global orientation from 30% to 80%. Such a move would require a joint effort between Australian industry and tertiary education institutions, because an ability to operate effectively in diverse cultural environments requires both theoretical, tertiary sector knowledge, and practical industry experience (Gniewosz, 2000). Adler (2002) categorised phases of business re-orientation from domestic to global, and consequent necessary changes to cultural sensitivities with regard to different market sectors, as domestic, multidomestic, multinational, and global. These four sectors are discussed below.

Domestic. No exports are involved, cultural sensitivity is marginally important, and company business strategy is based on one best way.

Multidomestic. Products are exported to one or more offshore markets, in addition to servicing domestic markets. Cultural sensitivity becomes important. Managers must understand the appropriate approaches to customers of various cultures in countries where goods are sold.

Strategic assumption is many good ways i.e., a number of different marketing and product approaches are required, dependent on countries and cultures involved. .

Multinational. In this situation a number of companies compete in the international market with items (commodities) that are only differentiated by price. Because company strategic assumption is least cost, any advantage from superior cultural sensibility tends to be negated.

Global. This is a stage beyond multinational operations. As the base line is high quality and least cost, competition comes from value-adding by strategic thinking, rapid response to customer requirements, and customisation. The strategic approach swings back to many good ways, and cultural sensitivity becomes critical.

Higgs (1996) noted that human resource management in a global context inevitably leads to dealing with challenges posed by cultural diversity: to develop cross-cultural organisational management practices satisfying demands of global competitiveness, multinational operations, and worldwide learning capability. Laurent (1983) classified organisational management as being either task-oriented, where organisational culture is focused on tasks that have to be performed and authority is defined by function; or relationship-orientated where results are achieved through people-relationship management. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) developed a corporate image model (see Figure 2.1), based on a person- or task-orientation, similar to Laurent's (1983) classification. Their model recognized that three important aspects of organisational structure were staff relationships within an organisation, how superior/subordinate relationships are defined, and the place of employees in determining organisational goals and future.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) described characteristics of corporate structures shown in Figure 2.1 below as follows:

Family. A hierarchical, power- and person-oriented structure; CEO in position of *Father of the Family*; family type relationship between superiors and subordinates.

Eiffel Tower. Classic western bureaucratic model, broad at base and narrow at top; hierarchical and role-oriented; superiors are obeyed because of position; authority comes with status.

Guided Missile. Project-oriented; based on team groups; egalitarian and with task flexibility as members do what is necessary rather than fill defined roles; when superimposed on Eiffel Tower structure it is known as a matrix organization.

Incubator. Egalitarian and fulfillment-oriented; small groups of individuals involved in creative activity; Silicon Valley type structure applicable to some small consultancies and think tanks.

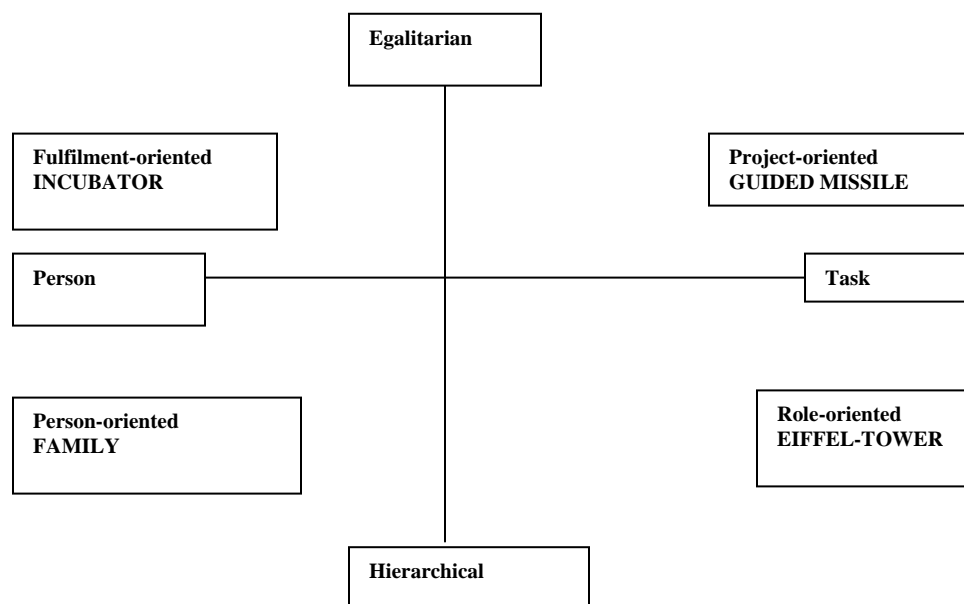


Figure 2.1 Corporate Images

Source: Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2002.

Adler's (2002) definition of domestic and international markets, and the cultural sensitivities involved, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2002) discussion of corporate structures and characteristics, are relevant to generic capability development. Two general research questions emerge:

Research Question 1: *How do companies rank the generic capabilities they expect of logistics graduates they employ?*

Research Question 2: *How does organisational structure or culture influence the priority of generic capabilities required of logistics graduates?*

These questions are introduced at this stage to provide a direction for following sections of this literature review. They will be covered again in the final section, which discusses generic capability development.

An issue arising from Figure 2.1 corporate structures is that of the role of leaders and managers in organisations. Sarros and Moors (2001) drew a distinction between managers' roles in establishing order and culture, and leaders' responsibilities for creating organisational vision and change. This differentiation of roles conflicts with Schein's (1992) view that leaders have a dual responsibility for both creating cultures, and for ensuring that such cultures adjust to changing competitive environments.

Lakomski (2001), noting that concern with organisational culture was a relatively new phenomenon, argued that there were inconsistencies in Schein's (1992) theory. These were, in part, that if leaders create organisational cultures, and are part of such cultures, it is difficult to accept that they could step out of those cultures to identify dysfunctional elements.

A full discussion of Lakomski's (2001) *neuroscientific* concept of organisational culture, which includes the basis for her disagreement with Schein's (1992) theory of organisational change, is beyond the scope of this research. However, her conclusion that *change... is slow and piecemeal because it is so context-sensitive* (p.75) has implications for organisational knowledge management, and, hence, for generic capabilities required to adjust to, and manage, change. Lee and Tay (2003) commented on links between knowledge and change, noting that *more than 50% of a KM solution is about change management* (p.139).

The increasing importance of knowledge management in international business was noted by Bresman, Birkinshaw and Nobel (1999), who commented that mastery of knowledge management was a key to success in future markets. To achieve such mastery, knowledge management must be linked with organisational strategic planning policy, and with management ability to interpret and act on disseminated knowledge (Milton-Smith, 2003). Operational

knowledge management, and its impact on generic attributes, is discussed in the next section as a prelude to a review of literature on generic capability development.

Organisational Knowledge Management

Senge (1990), in his seminal work, *The Fifth Discipline*, argued that the reason that learning organisations existed was because only companies that could maximize the use of organisational knowledge resources had the flexibility to adjust to rapidly changing environments. In a study of joint venture operations, Inkpen and Crossan (1995) adopted a similar line, suggesting that learning organisations, over the longer term, would out-perform competitors, but they also posed an important question: how could knowledge within organisations be shared? The view that learning arrangements within organisations contributed a strategic competitive edge had, by the mid-1990s, become generally accepted (Grainger & Miyamoto, 2003). However, Hoecklin (1995) qualified this paradigm by adding that the extent to which faster and better learning within organisations could be implemented was dependent on an ability of people of different cultures to communicate, and to understand each other's values.

Limitations on the extent to which organisational knowledge can be regarded as a competitive weapon were expressed in blunt terms by Lasserre and Schütte (1995, p.xv) when they commented that *the West cannot expect to compete successfully with Asia as long as the Asians know more about the West than the West knows about Asia*. These investigators concluded that, in Asia, effective management involved the development of suitable attitudes towards cultural differences, and therefore information sharing and communication were important competitive factors. Their view is consistent with an earlier comment by Weinshall (1977) that communication seemed to be the most important factor affecting multinational management.

Despite a consistent body of literature since the late 1970s stressing the importance of formalized knowledge management protocols, Bresnam et al. (1999) noted that much of the tacit knowledge existing as a result of individual manager's experience was not collated. At the same time, increasing pressure of global competition highlighted the importance of improving knowledge management arrangements. A recent study (Mudambi, 2002) noted that managers and academics

were attempting to bring knowledge management out of a purely research and development setting into a more operational environment. Mudambi concluded that, for this to be successful, and for underlying innovative potential to be identified, efficient knowledge management policy was required. As Milton-Smith (2003, p. 2) commented:

It is the job of the leader to ensure not only that the right people have the right knowledge at the right time but also that this knowledge is aligned with organizational strategy and effectively acted upon.

A convergence of different cultural attitudes and information sharing was identified by Minbaeva and Michailova (2004), who focused on the ability of organisations to disseminate knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge. These authors reported that a major issue was a capacity of organisations to implement a knowledge transfer system, depending as that transfer system did, on both ability and willingness of managers to disseminate tacit knowledge. Hernes (1999), on the contrary, considered that the great challenge in the knowledge age lay in enabling recipients to make sense of data they received. Callender (2003, p.57) suggested that one way of doing this would be to arrange data in forms which were *intuitively familiar to users*.

Holden (2002) described the so called new economy as involving, in part, instant communications, global reach, knowledge as an important organisational resource, and increasing use of multicultural teams in international business. Nunan (1999) agreed that the main drivers for globalisation were new information and communication technologies, which resulted in greatly increased competition, and global products becoming very similar to each other, a trend that had also been noted by Adler (2002). Furthermore, in Nunan's view, this homogenisation had extended to educational outcomes because generic requirements were being dictated by global employment agencies. Marginson (2003) arrived at a similar conclusion, commenting that the transformation of Australian higher education, in the past two decades, owed much to the globalisation of communications, knowledge, and skilled labour. These globalisation developments had resulted in pressure on higher education institutions from government and business to improve the quality of their graduates, especially in the area of generic capabilities.

To summarize, knowledge management is seen by both researchers and managers as an important aid to achieving competitive advantage. However much valuable tacit knowledge existing in organisations is never collected. One reason for this is a lack of efficient methods of communicating such knowledge, although new information and communication technologies are considered to be one of the most important drivers of globalisation. New communication technologies have, however, resulted in homogenization of products including education, and placed pressures on higher education institutions because definition of graduate generic requirements is being dictated by global employment agencies. This point is taken up in the next section which deals with which generic capabilities should be developed, and discusses influences of cultural, economic and social factors on such development.

Which Generic Capabilities Should Be Developed?

Over the previous two decades, considerable attention has been devoted by higher education institutions to development of graduates' generic skills applicable across a broad range of business relationships, and in a variety of cultural and organisational contexts. A report by the ATN cluster of five universities (Queensland University of Technology; University of Technology, Sydney; RMIT University; University of South Australia, Adelaide; and Curtin University, Perth) stated (ATN 2000, p.1):

A growing movement internationally recognizes that if particular attributes are to be acquired by university graduates then their acquisition will depend in large part on the conscious provision of experiences and opportunities conducive to their development during a course of study.

Such skills are known by a number of different names: core skills, employability skills, key competencies, essential skills, and transferable skills (National Centre for Vocational and Educational Research (NCVER), 2003). The ATN (2000) report favoured generic capabilities on the grounds that any set of attributes a university agrees as being those it expects graduates to aspire to is generic. Capability has been defined as the ability of professionals to take effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances (Stephenson, 1992, cited in Bowden & Marton, 1999, p. 97). There is also a difference between generic attributes, the

qualities, skills, and understandings (including disciplinary expertise) that a university community agrees its students should develop, and generic capabilities, attributes that go beyond disciplinary expertise.

The ATN (2000) report asserted that there were three main arguments for putting in place, and developing, a set of generic capabilities. The first was a university's responsibility to provide graduates who can contribute to social good, the second to prepare students for an uncertain future, and the third was the view of employers that graduates should have both disciplinary expertise and work-related skills such as communication, teamwork, and innovative skills. A qualification on the need for the development of generic capabilities was that such development has little meaning unless elaborated within the context of a discipline (ATN, 2000).

One overriding challenge associated with developing generic capabilities programs is the identification, in broad terms, of precisely what capabilities are involved. The United Kingdom Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) (1995) identified three levels of graduate attributes associated with the award of a degree: discipline specific attributes; shared general attributes such as are found in life sciences; and non-disciplinary generic attributes common to most graduates. These three levels did not include specific mention of cultural skills, although such skills could be implied in all three levels. NCVER (2003), noting that there were a number of lists of generic skills, identified six broad skills common to most lists: basic disciplinary skills; personal relationship skills; thinking skills; personal attributes; general business skills; and social skills. Again, most of these skills had an implied rather than explicit cultural element.

An important development in the generic skills debate in Australia, in the context of this research, is the report of the Mayer Committee (1992). This report recognized the need for young people in post-secondary education and training to develop generic and transferable employment skills. In consultation with industry, the Mayer Committee developed a set of key competencies necessary to prepare young people for employment. These key competencies were: communicating ideas and information; using mathematical ideas and techniques; working with others and in teams; solving problems; planning and organizing activities; collecting, analyzing, and organizing information; and, using technology (NCVER, 2003).

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) (1992), as a result of research commissioned as part of input to the 1992 Higher Education Council (HEC) report *Higher Education: Achieving Quality*, concluded that higher education students needed opportunities to develop both written and oral communication skills. Nevertheless, despite this earlier research, there appears to have been little change between 1992 and 2000 in the development of graduates' communication skills.

A study of 1105 employers conducted by AC Nielsen for the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) (2000) found that graduates' communication skills were a problem. AC Nielsen surveyed employers' views of new graduates entering the labour market and reported that, in terms of relative importance, the greatest skill deficiencies were in creativity and flair, oral business communications, and problem solving. In this survey, larger businesses consistently rated their new graduates more highly than smaller businesses, perhaps because they attracted the best graduates. Employers' main reasons for recruiting graduates, apart from perceptions that they were better educated, were to train them in organisational procedures, to introduce new knowledge into an organisation, and to groom them to be future managers (AC Nielsen, 2000).

Research by the Allen Group (2000) for the Australian Industry Group (AiG) involved a survey of 350 enterprises, and identified generic skills required for competitive enterprises under three categories: generic core or basic skills, interpersonal or relationship skills, and personal attributes. This classification of generic skills was an advance on earlier work and is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Generic Skills Required for Competitive Enterprises

Generic core or Basic skills	Interpersonal or Relationship skills	Personal attributes
Literacy	Communication	Capacity to learn
Numeracy	Team working	Willingness to embrace change
IT capability	Customer focus	Independent problem solving and reasoning capability
Understanding of systems relationships	Project and personal management	Practicality and business orientation

Source. Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry/ Business Council of Australia (ACCI/BCA) (2002)

Much of this earlier research was brought together by ACCI/BCA in a project *Employability Skills for the Future* (2002), undertaken for the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), based on research with small, medium, and large businesses. A number of critical aspects formed a basis for the ACCI/BCA research, among them being the following:

- *Employers have identified the importance of what have been termed 'personal attributes that contribute to employability' and indicate that these are required as part of the set of employability skills.*
- *Small and medium-sized enterprises, and large enterprises have identified the same critical mix of skills as being relevant to the employability and ongoing employment of individuals.*
- *The skills identified as critical to employability are broadly consistent across industry sectors and all are important though the elements would depend on the industry and workplace context (ACCI/BCA, 2002, pp. 5-6).*

The ACCI/BCA (2002) report developed an employability skills framework of personal attributes and key employment skills as shown in Table 2.2. Employability skills are defined as: *skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions* (ACCI/BCA, 2002, p.3).

Satisfaction of employers' demands for graduates with all of these generic capabilities is very difficult. This is particularly the case because employers' expectations of graduates' generic capabilities tend to be strongly influenced by situational and contextual factors (Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2004). Crebert et al. suggested that, although higher education institutions could not guarantee that all graduates would achieve all those desired generic capabilities outlined by employers, at least all graduates should be guaranteed the opportunity to do so

Table 2.2 Employability Skills Framework

Personal Attributes

Loyalty	Ability to deal with pressure
Positive self-esteem	Reliability
Commitment	Motivation
Sense of humour	Personal presentation
Honesty and integrity	Adaptability
Balanced attitude to work/home life	Commonsense
Enthusiasm	

Key Skills

- Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employers and customers
- Team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes
- Problem solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes
- Initiative and Enterprise Skills that contribute to innovative outcomes
- Planning and Organising Skills that contribute to long term and short term strategic planning
- Self Management Skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth
- Learning Skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks

Source. ACCI/BCA (2002)

Literature dealing specifically with cross-cultural management requirements appears to recommend generic capabilities that are more aligned with personal attributes than with employability skills. This is demonstrated by a comparison of cross-cultural capabilities suggested by Tung (1996), Lloyd and Hartel (2003), and Chang and Tharenou (2004), as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Comparison of Suggested Cross-Cultural Generic Capabilities-Tung (1996), Lloyd and Hartel (2003), and Chang and Tharenou (2004)

Tung (1996)	Lloyd and Hartel (2003)	Chang and Tharenou (2004)
Ability to balance demands of global integration and local responsiveness	Dissimilarity openness	Cultural empathy, Learning on the job
Ability to work in multicultural teams	Intercultural communication	Communication skills
Ability to work with and manage people	Emotion management skills	Generic skills (1) Personal style

Note. Generic skills include motivation, consultation, planning, conflict resolution, goal and task orientation, and budgeting skills.

Generic capabilities suggested by Tung (1996), and Chang and Tharenou (2004) include key employability and personal attribute skills (Table 2.2), but also have an explicit multicultural focus not evident in the ACCI/BCA (2002) findings. Lloyd and Hartel's (2003) list, however, is more focused on personal attributes, and covers competencies these investigators considered essential for culturally-diverse teams. The multicultural focus of generic capability development was also stressed by Volet (2004,p1) who argued that one of the goals for enriching graduates' generic attributes was *intercultural competence*.

The emphasis placed on a need for graduates to develop intercultural competencies as part of their generic capabilities implies two things. First, intercultural aspects are not being well covered in Australian higher education generic capabilities programs, and this might place international students at a disadvantage. Second, in any group of Australian and international students, national cultural characteristics will be evident, particularly assumptions about proper and accepted ways of doing things, which Schein (1992) considered to be the essence of culture. Accordingly, two further hypotheses are derived from these implications :

Hypothesis 3: *Australian and Asian graduates differ on their views about how well the RMIT logistics program covers generic capabilities.*

Hypothesis 4: *Australian and Asian rank generic capabilities in different orders of priority.*

A further set of competencies for managing cultural differences was identified by Schneider and Barsoux (2003). These competencies are shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Competencies for Managing Differences Abroad

Relationship skills
Linguistic ability
Motivation to live abroad (cultural curiosity)
Tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity
Flexibility
Patience and respect
Cultural empathy
Strong sense of self (ego strength)
Sense of humour

Source. Schneider and Barsoux (2003)

Competencies listed in Table 2.4 include both personal attributes similar to those in Table 2.2, and cross-cultural competencies similar to those in Table 2.3. Nevertheless, there are some notable differences. A motivation to live abroad is an important factor in the way expatriates, and their families, attempt to adjust to living in a different culture but, to that extent, might be considered to be a group rather than individual attribute. Patience and respect, however, is an

important competency unique to Table 2.4, and was described by Schneider and Barsoux (2003, p.193) as *the golden rule of international business* which is broken most frequently.

Turning to the European scene, a strategy paper, prepared by the Directorate for Education, Employment, Labor and Social Affairs (2002) for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), discussed the issues of definition and selection of competencies (DeSeCo), and described work that had been carried out over the five year period 1998-2002. Focus of this research was on *theoretical and conceptual foundations for the definition and selection of key competencies* (DeSeCo, 2002, p.2). Three interrelated key competencies, each with a different focus, were identified: acting autonomously; using tools interactively; and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups. These key competencies, and the elements which go to make up each individual competency, are shown in Table 2.5

Table 2.5 Elements of Key Competencies (DeSeCo, 2002)

Acting autonomously

- Ability to defend and assert one's rights, interests, responsibilities, limits and needs;
- Ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects; and
- Ability to act within the big picture/the larger context.

Using tools interactively

- Ability to use language, symbols, and text interactively;
- Ability to use knowledge and information interactively; and
- Ability to use (new) technology interactively

Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups

- Ability to relate well to others
- Ability to cooperate
- Ability to manage and resolve conflict

Source. DeSeCo (2002)

Elements comprising the two latter key competencies shown in Table 2.5, using tools interactively and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups, are very similar to generic capabilities outlined in previous Tables. However, the key competency of acting autonomously puts explicit emphasis on individuality, and on personal rights. This competency therefore

represents an assertion of social, rather than economic or political, importance of generic capabilities, a position which is consistent with the views of other researchers (Preston, 1999; Jones, 2001; Marginson, 2003; Volet, 2004).

Assessment of generic capabilities, however defined, is a complex question. For example, in the Australian context, a mixture of personal attributes and generic skills evident in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 raises the issue of which category of attributes should be the focus of assessment. One assessment method in use is the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA), a national test conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). GSA assesses students against four skills: written communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal understanding. These skills were identified by DETYA (2000) as the generic capabilities Australian employers considered to be most important.

Ballantyne (2004) asserted that the GSA had the potential to provide a university with information on the success, or otherwise, of generic capability development programs. Nunan (2002), arguing on the basis of meaningfulness, authenticity, and manageability, stated that the GSA was manageable, but had been criticized for not meeting the other two criteria.

In the OECD, the DeSeCo (2002) report noted that international comparative assessments of competencies had concentrated on one key competency, using tools interactively. As in the Australian situation with the GSA, this appears to be primarily because theory provided benchmarks which could be used for assessment purposes. The DeSeCo Report (2002) recommended that future research should concentrate on the other two competencies, acting autonomously and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups, because these competencies were more socially and culturally embedded.

The manner in which the generic capability debate has developed, in a broader educational context, is not without its critics. Marginson (2003) commented that globalisation, particularly of communications, has resulted in the marketisation of education, and has had a *corrosive effect on professional practices in higher education* (p.4). As has been discussed earlier in this review,

globalisation also has a major influence on generic capabilities required by managers in a global economy.

Jones (2001) questioned whether social factors have any influence in generic capability development, in an environment seemingly dominated by economic and political factors, and Volet (2004) stressed a need for development of attitudes that go beyond the workplace so that graduates are good social citizens. The OECD position on a change of emphasis from industry benchmark capabilities to more culturally-, and socially-embedded competencies has already been noted.

In the United Kingdom, Drummond, Nixon, and Wiltshire (1998) suggested that progress in personal transferable skills (generic capabilities) development had met with only limited success, caused not so much by lack of understanding of what was required but by difficulties in promoting and managing change. Accepting that pressures for generic capabilities would increase in the future, these researchers concluded that the HE sector must develop in ways which acknowledge changing context within which this sector operates, particularly if it wishes to have some input to the generic capabilities development agenda. Thus, it can be argued that this literature review indicates that a similar challenge faces the higher education sector in Australia.

To summarise, this section has discussed various types of generic capabilities identified in studies in Australia and overseas. The importance of an intercultural input to generic capabilities has been identified, as have differences between personal attributes and employability skills. Challenges facing development of generic capabilities in higher education are: identification of relevant capabilities that meet both academic and industry standards; methods of assessment of generic capabilities; and apparent conflict between economic, social, and political views of what constitute appropriate generic capabilities that graduates should display.

Conclusion

This literature review indicates that, at least since the 1950s, there has been considerable attention paid to the impact of cultural differences on business management and subsequently a number of long-standing paradigms are now being questioned. This is particularly so in the case of Asian cultural paradigms, on the grounds that they do not take into account changes in CHC society as relatively young managers are exposed to western business practices. Other broader influences driving cultural change are globalisation, and a recognition of the value of culture as knowledge management becomes an increasingly important consideration. As a consequence of these trends, there is increasing interest in generic capabilities that graduates require in a globalised environment. However, as pointed out by Volet (2004), there still appeared to be problems with intercultural relationships at Australian universities, and an apparent lack of networking between Australian and Asian students. This lack of appreciation of the value of cultural diversity by both academics and students is reflected, to some extent, in the ambivalent attitude of some organisations towards cultural diversity, and their failure to implement efficient knowledge management systems.

In much of the literature reviewed, models e.g.; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2002) corporate images, are used to describe values and assumptions underlying organisational structure, and management and employee relationships. There remains debate about the extent to which culture is static or dynamic, and whether older cultural paradigms are still current. Questions being posed in current literature are: Is national culture changing and, if it is, what is initiating that change? Answers to those questions, interalia, have an important influence on what sort of generic capabilities graduates will need to develop in the future.

The impact of globalisation on education, job mobility, and demands for vocational as opposed to more general higher education programs, has been a prominent feature of the present review. Of particular importance is the view expressed in the literature that the influence of globalisation, and the international mobility of workers, means that management capabilities once confined to international and multinational appointments will, in the future, be needed by managers of domestic companies.

In both academic and government reports, generic capabilities are expressed in terms of employability skills and personal attributes. Industry appears to take a more pragmatic view, arguing that graduates lack communication skills, interpersonal skills, and an understanding of business practice. Based on this view, long lists of capabilities and skills such as those developed in the ACCI/BCA (2002) report raise substantial questions about prioritization of such attributes, and how they should be taught and assessed. In this regard, two other points are important: the extent to which intercultural competence should be a basis for generic capability program design; and how higher education institutions can achieve a balance between the social, economic, and political pressures on their curricula, including generic capability development programs.

A major gap in the literature reviewed is the failure of most commentators to correlate generic capabilities in terms of organisational size, ownership, and cultural identification. Much research, especially in the more well-known paradigms, reflects management views of generic capabilities, and appears to have had little input from recent graduates. There also appears to be a disconnect between the work of researchers working in the fields of international management and culture, and researchers involved in, for example, small- or medium-sized business analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

To summarize, two research questions and four hypotheses were derived from this literature review. They are:

Research Questions

- 1. How do companies rank the generic capabilities they expect of logistic graduates whom they employ?*
- 2. To what extent does organisational structure or culture influence the priority of generic capabilities companies expect of their employees?*

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitudes to work.*

Hypothesis 2: *Australian and Asian graduates differ in their views of their work environment.*

Hypothesis 3: *Australian and Asian graduates differ in their views about how well the RMIT logistics program covers generic capabilities.*

Hypothesis 4: *Australian and Asian rank generic capabilities in different orders of priority.*

The two research questions form the basis for the qualitative case studies reported in Chapter 3, and the four hypotheses are tested in an empirical quantitative analysis of a graduate survey, findings of which are discussed in Chapter 4. Methodology for each approach, and the reason for using both qualitative and quantitative methods in this thesis, was outlined in Chapter 1, and is discussed in detail in the relevant chapters. The following chapter, Chapter 3, comprises eight case studies of Australian and Asian firms, in four comparative sets, designed around the two research questions identified on the basis of this literature review.

Chapter 3

Study 1

Introduction

Study 1 is concerned primarily with two research questions: 1. How do companies rank the generic capabilities they expect of logistic graduates whom they employ? 2. To what extent does organisational structure and culture influence the priority of generic capabilities companies expect of their employees? This chapter discusses the theoretical approach chosen, and why a case study method is used. Participant selection, data collection, data analysis and validation procedures, limitations associated with the present methodology, and ethical aspects are also outlined. Four major and four minor case studies are reported, the findings of which form a basis for a matrix evaluation of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research Paradigm

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.15) defined a paradigm as:

...a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners: paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate, and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological considerations.

Schwandt (1997) stated that two critical issues associated with this world-view definition were what comprises different methodological paradigms in social inquiry, and how these paradigms are accomplished. Researchers choose between competing paradigms because *a research problem raises the issue as to which skill is appropriate to do the job required within the limits established* (Hughes, 1980, p.13), and this means finding a particular research methodology

which will provide the appropriate data. Green (2001) suggested that such a choice is determined by answers to a number of questions concerning theoretical positions framing researchers' paradigms; a researcher's skills and preference for particular ways of working; type of research valued by the researcher's discipline; and fit of research methods with the given focus or topic.

The Interpretivism Paradigm is concerned with *the ways in which human beings individually and collectively interpret or construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts* (Schwandt, 1997, p.18). Maxwell (2002) used the term *interpretive validity* to describe research involving not only *a valid description of physical objects, events, and behaviors in the settings they study* (p.48), but also what these events, objects, behaviors mean to participants. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) asserted that *naturalistic inquiry demands a natural setting* because:

Phenomena of study, what ever they may be-physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological- take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves...No phenomenon can be understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harbored, and supported it (p.189).

Basic beliefs of three such paradigms are shown in Table 3.1. Two paradigms have not been included, critical theory because its ontology of historical realism is not appropriate to this research which involves contemporary and future events; and the participatory paradigm because this involves *political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.168), and so indicates a collaborative approach going beyond the case study method adopted

As the focus of this research is the social interaction which occurs when individuals, albeit in an organisational context, *interpret and give meaning to both their own, and to others', behaviour* (Hughes, 1980, p.71), an interpretivist paradigm is more appropriate than a value-free positivist approach because it probes the values participants attach to specific attributes.

Table 3.1 Basic Beliefs of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms

Item	Positivism and Post Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Naïve realism-"real" reality but apprehendable [Critical realism-"real" reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable]	Relativism-local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; Findings true [Modified Dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true]	Transactionalist/ subjectivist/created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantification methods [Modified experimental/ Manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods]	Hermeneutical/ dialectical

Note. Post Positivism basic beliefs in square brackets.

Source. Adapted from Denzin and Lincoln (2000), p.22.

Methodology

Methodology, *the theory of how inquiry should proceed* (Schwandt, 1997, p.93), follows a naturalistic inquiry model. In broad terms, social research methodologies are defined as qualitative or quantitative (Silverman, 2005), with qualitative research implying an emphasis on processes, and meanings not experimentally measured, and on reality in a social context, in a value-laden framework. Quantitative research, on the other hand, focuses on measurements and analyses of causal relationships between variables, in a value-free framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative methodology is more often associated with naturalistic inquiry. Lee (1999, p. 41) stated that, if any of the following questions could be answered in the affirmative, a qualitative method should be used:

- *Is it important for the researcher to understand the in-depth processes that operate within the organisation or industry?*
- *Do the research issues involve poorly understood organisational phenomena and systems?*
- *Is the researcher interested in the differences between stated organisational policies and their actual implementation (e.g., strategic versus operating plans)?*
- *Does the researcher want to study ill-structured linkages within organisational entities?*
- *Does the study involve variables that do not lend themselves to experiments for practical or ethical reasons?*
- *Is the point of the study to discover new or thus far unspecified variables?*

In this research four of these questions appear to warrant affirmative answers, and thus, a qualitative method can be considered appropriate for the purpose of this thesis which is to develop, rather than test, theory. Schwandt (1997) defined *theory*, in the context of social sciences, as *a unified, systematic, explanation of a diverse range of social phenomena* (p.154). Goetz and LeCompte (1985, p.58) commented that

As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories... as events are constantly compared with previous events, new typological dimensions, as well as new relationships, may be discovered .

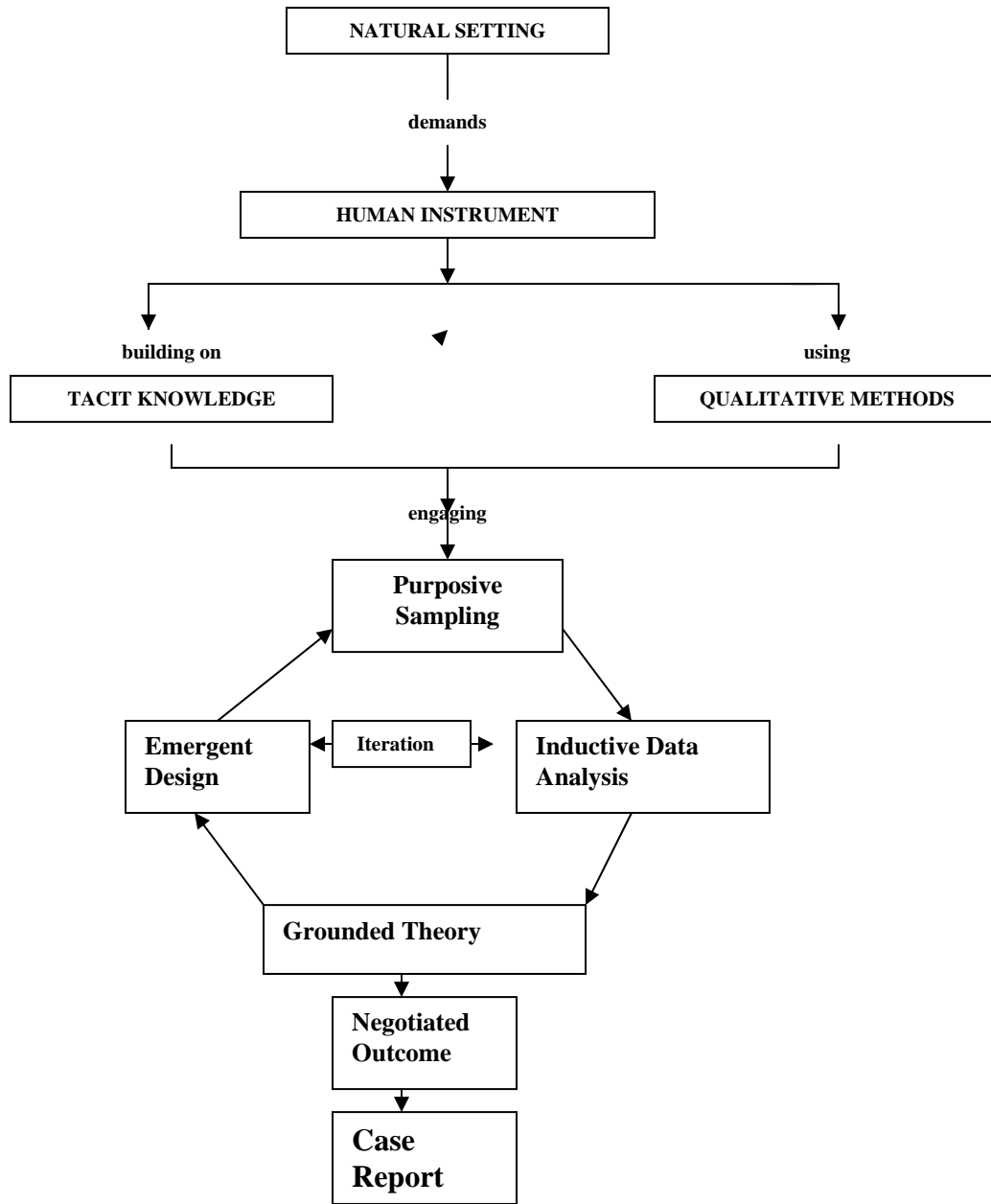


Figure 3.1 The Flow of Naturalistic Inquiry

Source: Adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985

Glaser and Strauss (1967) described *comparative analysis* as a strategic method for *generating theory to assign the method its fullest generality for use on social units of any size, large or small...*(p.21), and referred (p.29) to *grounded theories* as being *highly applicable to areas under study* in social research. Schwandt (1997) elaborated on the term *grounded theory methodology*, and commented that it was often used *in a nonspecific way to refer to any approach to developing theoretical ideas...that somehow begins with data*, but he implied that such usage was not accurate because *grounded theory methodology... is a set of procedures for producing substantive theory of social phenomena which requires a concept-indicator model of analysis, which, in turn, employs the method of constant comparison* (p.60). This investigation used grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba,1985; Schwandt, 1997) to generate theory relevant to the research questions discussed in Study 1 and, in particular, followed the model proposed by Lincoln and Guba, (1985) (p.187) as a naturalistic inquiry design (see Figure 3.1).

Research Strategy

Yin (2003) discussed various types of research strategies: experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study; in terms of how, why, who, what, where, how many, and how much, questions. The fit of specific strategies to particular scenarios is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies

Strategy	Form of Research Question	Requires Control of Behavioral Events	Focuses on Contemporary Events
Experiment	how, why	Yes	Yes
Survey	who, what where, How many, how much	No	Yes
Archival Analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much	No	Yes/No
History	how, why	No	No
Case Study	how, why	No	Yes

Source. Yin (2003)

Both research questions analyzed in Study 1 are essentially *how* questions: How do, and why do, companies consider certain generic capabilities to be more important than others, and how, and why, does company culture and structure influence those considerations? As Yin (2003) pointed out, *how* and *why* questions are more explanatory, and so likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research strategies. As the present investigator has no control over behavioral events in this research, experiments are not appropriate. On the other hand, data relate to contemporary situations, and therefore are not historical. Accordingly, it can be argued that, of the three *how* and *why* strategies discussed by Yin (2003), a case study method is most appropriate for Study 1.

Stake (2002, p.24) listed more general characteristics of case studies in social science literature as:

Descriptions that are complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables; Data that are likely to be gathered at least partly by personalistic observation; and a writing style that is informal, perhaps narrative, possibly with verbatim quotation, illustration and even allusion and metaphor.

In this research, the case study method is used in a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) consisting of four major cases, and four minor cases, in a multi-site context (Schofield, 2002). Yin (2003, p.53) recommended that, whenever possible, *multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs* because *the analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial*. Similarly, Bennett and George (1997, p.2) noted that, in using cross-case analysis to assess and refine existing theories, and more generally, to develop empirical theory, the research method should be both *structured* in that the same general questions were asked of each case, and *focused* because *a selective theoretical focus guides the analysis of the cases* .

Both criteria were observed in this investigation as all respondents were interviewed using the same list of open-ended questions, and the theoretical focus was on how organisational structure and culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002) influenced the relative importance of generic capabilities.

An important question arising in cross-case analysis was what constituted an ideal number of cases. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.30) point out that one reason for doing cross-case analysis is to enhance generalization, but they did not suggest an appropriate number of cases, noting that it depended on conceptual issues, though *with high complexity, a study with more than 15 cases or so can become unwieldy*. Eisenhardt (2002, p.27) is more specific and suggests that, *while there is no ideal number, a number between 4 and 10 cases works well*. Based on this guidance, eight case studies were investigated in Study 1.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) discussed two types of theory that can be generated by comparative analysis, *substantive* theory and *formal* theory. Substantive theory was defined as *that developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry, such as...professional education...or research organisations*. Formal theory, on the other hand, was theory *developed for a formal, or conceptual, area of sociological inquiry such as...formal organisation, socialization, authority and power, reward systems* (p.32). In conclusion, this investigation is concerned with substantive, rather than formal, theory because it involves *a comparative analysis between or among groups within the same substantive area* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.33), the substantive area in this instance being the relative importance of generic capabilities to logistics organisations.

Selection of Cases

Selection of case(s) is rarely done on a random sampling basis (Schwandt, 1997; Eisenhardt, 2002; Yin, 2003). As Mitchell (2002) pointed out *logical inference is epistemologically quite independent of statistical inference* (p.177), and Yin (2003) noted that the aim of multiple-case studies was that each individual case should serve a specific purpose and, unlike probability sampling, it was wrong to regard every case as *similar to multiple respondents in a survey* (p.47). An example of such non-random selection was an investigation by Harris and Sutton (1997) of parting ceremonies in dying organisations. In that research, the investigators selected eight companies on the basis of organisation culture and business type from a population of dying organisations.

Cases included in Study 1 were selected using a purposive sampling method (Zikmund, 1997), a method consistent with that used by Harris and Sutton (1986). Public- and privately-owned companies were included, and two subsidiary criteria also applied. One was that a range of small (1-19 employees), medium (20-200 employees), and large (>200employees) (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2005) organisations should be covered, and the other that companies being interviewed should have, at some point, employed RMIT logistics graduates. The latter subsidiary criterion was initially considered to be essential, but was changed to desirable because it seemed more balanced to look at the whole industry, rather than only at employers of RMIT graduates.

Australian companies were selected from leaders in the logistics field listed in the 2003 *Who's Who in Contract Distribution*, (Supply Chain Review) based on the researcher's practical and theoretical knowledge of the industry gained over 30 years as a practitioner and academic and, more recently, as a member of the Commonwealth Government Freight Transport Logistics Industry Action Agenda Steering Committee (2001-2002).

Singaporean and Hong Kong companies were recommended by RMIT agents based on their local knowledge of logistics organisations in their locations in relation to generic capabilities relevant to this research. Table 3.3 provides data on organisations that took part in these case studies. Although an overall focus was on generic capabilities, each case pair was chosen because of cultural or structural characteristics that distinguished them from other case pairs. These characteristics are also shown in Table 3.3, and are discussed in case studies designated as major or minor depending on importance of the organisations in relation to the research topic, and on accessibility of in depth data on each organisation.

Table 3.3 CASE STUDY COMPARISONS

Case	Major/Minor	Location	Case Details	Special Characteristics
1	Major	Singapore	ALTIC MNC Public company	Company culture/knowledge management
2	Minor	Hong Kong	Hogan & Wilson P/L MNC Public company	Company culture/knowledge management
3	Major	Melbourne	Benedict Transport Large, National Family-owned	Company culture/operation
4	Minor	Melbourne	Cranston Transport Large, National Family-owned	Company culture/operation
5	Major	Melbourne	McCabe Logistics Large, International Family-owned	Company culture/overseas operating procedures
6	Minor	Hong Kong	Darragh Global Services MNC Private company	Company culture/overseas operating procedures
7	Major	Melbourne	Harrington Holdings Large, International Public company	Company culture/charismatic leadership
8	Minor	Melbourne	Greythorpe Consultants Small, International Family-owned	Company culture/charismatic leadership

Validity

Schwandt (1997, p.168) argued that, *in social science, validity is one of the criteria that traditionally serve as a benchmark for enquiry*. A criticism of the case study method is that it does not provide a sound basis for generalization, in other words, that it lacks external validity. Kaplan (1964, p.91) argued that the most important characteristic of generalization was that it must be *truly universal, unrestricted as to time and space. It must formulate what is always and everywhere the case, provided only that the appropriate conditions are satisfied*.

Stake (2002, p.24) put forward a view that *full and thorough knowledge of the particular* can be considered to be *naturalistic generalization*, and to using this sort of generalization *is being both intuitive and empirical*. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.116), however, pointed out the dilemma which arises because *generalizations are nomothetic in nature, that is, law-like, but in order to use them, for purposes of prediction or control,...the generalizations must be applied to particulars* [which are idiographic, that is, based on the individual]. Their position is that local conditions *make it impossible to generalize*, but that the extent that a *working hypothesis* developed in one context is applicable in another context *must be empirical: the degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what we shall call 'fittingness'* (Lincoln & Guba, p.124), and this depends on how much is known about working hypotheses. *We shall call that appropriate base of information a "thick description," following the usage introduced by Geertz (1973), and that thick description is provided by the researcher (enquirer) so anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.124-125).

This distinction is difficult to differentiate from Stake's (2002) full and thorough knowledge of the particular, or Kaplan's (1964) caveat that the appropriate conditions are satisfied, but does indicate that, from an interpretive viewpoint, case study results are transferable from one context to another. An important issue, however, is the extent to which such generalizations should apply.

Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that *grounded theory* had to be *sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse situations within the substantive area, not just to a specific type of situation* (p.237), Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that a more flexible approach was warranted, and that an appropriate basis for *transferability* was the concept proposed by Cronach (1975) that: *when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion* (pp.124-125). Such *proper weight* can be achieved by cross-case studies because:

Multiple-case sampling adds confidence to findings. By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where, and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings. We are following a replication strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined *internal validity* as *the extent to which variations in an outcome (dependent variable) can be attributed to controlled variation in an independent variable* (p.290). Schwandt (1997) noted that there are a number of interpretations of validity in qualitative research. One, which seems to be most relevant to this investigation, is *Fallibility validity*, which regards validity as *a test of whether an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers* (p.169). Hammersley (1990) argued that validity is judged by whether a report is credible, and plausible, *given the nature of the phenomenon being investigated, the circumstances of the research, and the characteristics of the researcher* (p.169).

Yin (2003) suggested that one of the most desirable techniques for strengthening *internal validity* is using a pattern-matching matching logic, defined by Campbell (1975) as *a situation where several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition* (p.6). Finally, *internal validity is also strengthened by reference to literature discussing similar findings...because it ties together underlying similarities in phenomena normally not associated with each other* (Eisenhardt, 2002, p.25). Such references are cited, where appropriate and relevant, in each case study.

Data Collection

Data collection was primarily by interview, and documentation research was used to augment and triangulate interview material (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) commented that interviews could be categorized by their *degree of structure, their degree of overtness, and the quality of the relationship between interviewer and respondent* (p.269). Along a structural continuum from structured interviews at one end to in-depth, unstructured interviews at the other, interviews in this investigation were focused or semi-structured (Dane, 1990). *This process entails researchers using the broad topic in which they are interested to guide the interview, and although questions are open-ended, an interview guide or schedule is developed around a list of topics without fixed wording or ordering of questions* (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1991, p.92). Semi-structured, or focused, interviews are appropriate *when an interviewer knows what he or she does not know, and can frame appropriate questions to find out* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.269).

An interview guide containing a number of open-ended questions, adapted from Kotter and Heskett. (1992), relating to company culture and generic capability importance (see Appendix 3.1) was forwarded to participating organisations at the time contact was made seeking approval for the interviews to take place. Interviews were usually conducted at interviewees' offices although two were, at the interviewees' request, carried out at RMIT.

At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were asked if they objected to their interview being tape recorded, and all except two agreed. Opinions vary on whether or not tape recorders should be used for this purpose. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for example, *do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons* (p.241) because of intrusiveness, potential for mechanical failure, and difficulty in noting non-verbal cues. On the other hand, Patton (1990) strongly advocated their employment. This researcher supports the use of tape recorders, especially in multi-case interviews, as manual recording during an interview is time consuming and distracting unless one is a skilled shorthand writer. An appropriate compromise to problems raised by Lincoln and Guba (1985) appears to be the use of both a tape recording, and

supplementary written notes to pick up non-verbal cues that may be important. Table 3.4 shows the profile of interviewees nominated by their organisations.

Table 3.4 Profile of Interviewees

Organisation	No. of Staff Interviewed	Position	Gender
ALTIC International	2	Vice President	Male
		Logistics Asia Pacific Director Human Resources Asia Pacific	Male
Hogan & Wilson P/L	1	Director Logistics Asia Pacific	Male
Benedict Transport	2	Managing Director	Male
		General Manager	Male
Cranston Transport Services	1	Director	Male
McCabe Logistics	1	Managing Director	Male
Darragh Global Services	1	Director Finance China	Male
Harrington Holdings	1	General Manager Human Resources	Male
Greythorpe Consultants	3	Managing Director	Male
		Manager Human Resources	Female
		Junior Consultant	Female

Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, using the interview guide to maintain focus on specific research questions, and the interviewer/interviewee relationship was on a peer-to-peer basis. After interviews were completed, tapes were transcribed to hard copy and returned to interviewees for comment. This aspect of the research presented problems because of the seniority of most of interviewees who, in three organisations, appeared to be too busy to respond to several requests for detailed comment. In the absence of negative comment, the investigator accepted no response as tacit agreement.

Funding difficulties necessitated two interviews in Hong Kong being conducted by a colleague with 30 years experience in the logistics industry, and who had been a senior member of the RMIT logistics group since 1991. A detailed briefing on both research focus, and the interview guide, was provided to the academic conducting those interviews

Data Analysis

Yin (2003) noted that verbatim or documentary records may only be part of a case study, or the first stage which leads to development of further themes, or working hypotheses, and, in either situation, *you still need an analytic strategy to address the larger or fuller case study* (p.110). Three general strategies were suggested, relying on theoretical propositions, thinking about rival explanations, and developing a case description (Yin, 2003), and the recommended strategy was:

The first and most preferred strategy is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to your case study. The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, reviews of literature, and new hypotheses or propositions (Yin 2003, pp.111-112).

In this investigation two significant propositions, discussed in Chapter 2, are firstly that organisational structure and culture conform generally to a model of corporate images developed by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) (see p.29). Secondly, that four skills (written communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal understanding) identified as important to Australian employers (DETYA,2000; Ballantyne, 2001), and expanded by the 2002 list of employability skills (ACCI/BCA, 2002), would also be important to Asian and multi-

national corporation (MNC) employers. These propositions provide a theoretical framework for case study analysis in this thesis. In addition, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners' (2002) corporate images model was used as a basis for creating an initial list of general codes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined codes as *tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study* (p.56), and commented that, regardless of when they were created or revised, *they should relate to one another in a coherent, study-important way* (p.62). Using codes assigned by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) to their model provided a structurally related set of both *open codes*, developed during first analysis of the case study, and *axial codes*, needed to develop themes identified in primary analysis. Final comparative analysis in this investigation was based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) analytic manipulation method of *making a matrix of categories and placing evidence within such categories* (Yin. 2003, p.111).

Neuman (2003) noted that *data analysis means a search for patterns in data-recurrent behaviours, objects, or a body of knowledge* (p.447). Once patterns have been identified, they can be interpreted in terms of research questions and context. Data analysis in this research utilizes the conceptually-clustered matrix model proposed by Miles and Huberman, (1994, p.127), and is guided by their concept of three concurrent activity flows: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, discussed below

Data reduction involves using Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners' (2002) corporate images model, and coding case study summaries in accordance with person-and task-oriented categories shown in that model (see Figure 2.1). As Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out, *qualitative data can be reduced and transformed in many ways: through selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in a larger pattern, and so on* (p.11), and a matrix format was used in this research.

Data was displayed in a conceptually-clustered format which assisted in identifying patterns, numerical ranking of generic capabilities, differences and similarities, initially within individual case-study pairs, and then across all four paired sets of cases. Conclusions were drawn from

data by reading across rows to get a profile of each respondent, and by reading down the columns to compare different respondents' responses, and were verified by comparing individual results of each paired-case analysis with an overall analysis of all three pairs of cases. To allow for differing management perspectives, a comparison of analyses of responses by management specialization that is, logistic managers versus human resource managers versus managing directors was also conducted. The conceptually-clustered matrix is shown at Appendix 3.2.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues vary, depending on whether or not the participant has given willing and informed consent (Zikmund, 1997, Neuman, 2003), and the *degree of overtness* relating to the degree of awareness that the respondent has both of the fact that he or she is being interviewed, and of *the purpose of that interview and how the resulting information will be used*. *Ethical practice requires that the interview by [sic] fully overt* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.269). All participants in this investigation were invited to participate, were informed of the purpose of the research, and were told that they were free to withdraw at any time. As participants had been assured that they would not be identified, names were not used in transcripts, and company names were disguised. Ethics clearance was obtained, and a copy of the plain language letter to participants is shown in Appendix 3.3.

Limitations

There are two major limitations to this research. The first is that funding constraints prevented the investigator from personally conducting two previously-arranged interviews in Hong Kong. Although these interviews were subsequently carried out by an experienced colleague, non-verbal cues could not be picked up, and the tape recordings were of poor quality and rather brief. Consequently, more reliance than normal had to be placed on company documentation. The second limitation was difficulty in establishing an ongoing link with some of the participants, and thus iteration of data was difficult and replication of case study data became more important.

CASE STUDIES

Details of eight case studies, selected and analyzed in accordance with the research plan discussed above, comprise the next section of this thesis.

Case Study 1: ALTIC International

ALTIC International is a large freight forwarding and logistics management organization, headquartered in the USA, with operations in 124 countries. As well as standard freight forwarding functions, this organisation provides its customers with an extensive range of Third Party Logistics (3PL), and supply chain management (SCM) services. Organisational culture is predominantly role-oriented and bureaucratic, but there is considerable variance between, and within, regions. This case study focuses on the Asia Pacific region which comprises a regional headquarters in Singapore and 13 country offices. Each country office has a distinctive culture reflecting the style of its General Manager, and of the predominant national culture. ALTIC has a policy of empowerment for senior managers, providing them with significant flexibility in the way in which they perform their functions. This policy is changing and becoming more centralized, particularly in relation to the approval of major projects with a higher degree of risk. Junior management positions in country offices are usually filled by local employees, but expatriate managers continue to be appointed at middle and senior levels across regions. There is considerable movement of regional headquarters staff, especially in the logistic and IT areas, to help country office staff with customer negotiations, systems development, contractual issues, and implementation. Except in very specific situations, there is little cross-cultural training, nor is there any formal arrangement for the exchange of cultural information. Initiative, enterprise, and teamwork skills are the generic capabilities ranked most highly by the senior logistics and human resource managers in the Asia Pacific region. Key themes in this case study are 3PL, supply chain management, role-orientation, bureaucratic processes, empowerment, cross-cultural training, and exchange of cultural information.

Background

Since the early 1990s, the basis for competitive advantage in the global market of the 21st Century has shifted from individual organizations to the supply chain. Customers are asking their logistic service providers for solutions that keep pace with the accelerating rates of change in technology and globalization (Harrison & van Hoek, 2002). Large multi-national freight forwarding and integrator organizations have recognized the need to review their current services, and to respond quickly to these changing demands. ALTIC International is one such company. This disguised case is based on a task faced by the Asia Pacific HR Regional Office of a multi-national freight forwarding and 3PL service provider. The case discusses development of those general skills needed by managers, especially at the graduate level, to work effectively, relate to clients, and contribute successfully to business development and strategic planning, in the context of the company's strategic decision to move into SCM.

Company Profile

ALTIC International is a multi-national SCM and transport solutions organization with its head office located in the USA. The company began as a freight forwarding organization with an emphasis on air freight, and, in the 1980s, added a small logistic management team to its head office structure. Company culture has been variously described as *very result oriented and very individualistic*. *Team is there as a backup* (Regional Human Resources Director, Asia-Pacific) (Dir HR), and:

At least at a national and regional level, I would call it entrepreneurial, the company is not too large to be overburdened with bureaucracy, focused on getting things done, making money, so I suggest it is a healthy culture of entrepreneurship (previous Vice President, Logistics, Asia-Pacific) (VP Log).

In broad terms, organizational culture is project-oriented with a bureaucratic overlay (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2003). As a North America-based organisation *there are many times where the US will attempt to force procedures and protocols down to a regional level* (VP Log), but the impact of this tendency can be minimized by the Regional Headquarters.

Over the previous 10 years logistic management has become an important part of the company's operations. Although representing between only 20-30% of revenue, the return on investment in logistic services is now much better than that of the company's traditional freight forwarding operations.

ALTIC is organized into three regions: European, American, and Asia Pacific. Asia Pacific has been an important market for many years. Within the European and Asia Pacific regions this company is organized further into Country Offices under the leadership of General Managers. General Managers assume full responsibility for operation and results of Country Offices, and are accountable to appropriate Regional Headquarters. Regional Headquarters report to Head Office, and ensure that general company policy, applicable across country boundaries, is observed.

ALTIC has a policy of empowerment for senior managers, providing them with significant flexibility in the way in which they perform their functions. However, the degree to which this then extends below Country Office level varies. As VP Log explained:

When you start to talk about how that [empowerment] rolls out at an individual country level, that becomes a factor of the style of the particular country manager, so whilst the organization is developed in such a manner that there is a tremendous level of empowerment at a country level, whether that cascades through the organization is a factor of the country manager himself and there are vastly different scenarios if you look across 10 or 15 countries in Asia.

This empowerment policy is gradually changing, particularly in relation to the approval of major projects that have a higher than normal degree of risk. Guidelines covering such new approval policies are developed by Regional Headquarters, but signed off at Head Office. The need for such policy has become more evident with the impact of globalisation, and the increasing outsourcing of logistics functions across two or more regions or countries.

Supply Chain Management

ALTIC became a 3PL provider in response to customer demands for service beyond traditional transportation roles that the company has performed since inception. The addition of services such as warehousing, software development, and inventory management of stock being moved between producers and customers, necessary to provide 3PL logistics services, fitted easily into the company's strategic planning, becoming a significant source of revenue and remaining the company's standard logistic product until the late 1990s. About this time a number of ALTIC's major clients sought an expanded service that would optimize benefits of off-shore production, a feature of increasing globalization. These organizations wanted service providers to be able to handle both inbound transportation of raw materials to off-shore manufacturing locations, as well as physical distribution (warehousing and transportation) of the finished products to the final destination.

Such a move to an SCM role involved management of logistics relationships between all elements of the supply chain, requiring much closer links with ALTIC clients, their suppliers and customers, than had previously been the case. Because clients also wanted project management and strategic planning assistance, ALTIC would become an essential partner in their business development plans, demanding a high level of trust between all organizations concerned. Another challenge is to develop information systems which would ensure an efficient and rapid flow of data throughout the supply chain (Christopher, 2005). Accordingly, ALTIC sees the SCM area as one where opportunities for service differentiation clearly exist once a suitable policy can be implemented. Consequently, the Asia Pacific Region has been made responsible for developing and testing a SCM framework that could eventually be rolled out through the whole company, globally.

The Asia Pacific Region

As well as Regional Headquarters in Singapore, the Asia Pacific region comprises 13 Country Offices: Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Mainland China, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The style of management in each Country Office reflects both the style of its General Manager, and its predominant culture. The latter ranges from traditional hierarchical cultures of North Asia to a more empowered approach in newer Country Offices where there are relatively younger General Managers.

The Asia Pacific Region has developed rapidly in the period 1990-2000, especially in the logistics management area because, as the Regional HR manager commented:

Company culture in Europe/USA is more mature but less customer-oriented. Asia/Pacific is hungrier, will always look at every customer as important.

For this reason, strategic planning undertaken by the SCM Group in Singapore has implications for the other two regions. As a result of the CEO's directive that the Asia Pacific Regional Headquarters develop and implement a business plan to make ALTIC one of the major SCM organizations in the Asia Pacific region in the timeframe 2005-2008, an SCM Strategy Group was formed. Each of the managers in the SCM Group has specific responsibilities covering supply chain design, information technology and software solutions, business development and major account management, sales and marketing, and human resource management. Dir HR is responsible for the latter task.

Generic Capabilities

As part of the SCM program, development of generic capabilities which would enable ALTIC management personnel, at all levels, to provide high levels of customer service needed to make the project successful are required. Such generic or behavioral capabilities are not discipline specific, because technical skills of ALTIC staff are assessed as a fundamental part of their selection process, and are reviewed on an annual basis. There is also a very good set of on-line training modules that company staff can access to maintain and update such skills. However,

these modules are not designed to develop more general capabilities, such as communication and teamwork skills.

Two members of ALTIC International in Asia Pacific region, Dir HR, and VP Log, were asked to rank the ACCI/BCA (2002) list of key skills (see p.37) in order of priority, 1=*highest* and 8=*lowest*. This ranking system applies in all the case studies. Their rankings are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Generic Capabilities Rankings by Dir HR and VP Log of ALTIC International (Asia Pacific)

Capability	Ranking	
	Dir HR	VP Log
Communication	5	5
Teamwork	3	2
Problem Solving	4	4
Initiative/Enterprise	1	1
Planning/Organizing	2	6
Self Management	6	7
Learning Skills	7	3
Technology Skills	8	8

Generally, the rankings demonstrate that both senior managers were looking for initiative and enterprise on the part of their subordinates, and that communication skills were considered less important than problem-solving and teamwork. Dir HR's rankings indicated a longer term view of employees' managerial potential, planning and organizing skills being rated very highly, whilst VP Log's rankings, which included a higher ranking for learning skills, were more consistent with an operational, day-to day perspective. Although technology skills were ranked lowest, this reflects an assumption that all managers in ALTIC have appropriate skills or they would not have been employed initially. It is noteworthy that ALTIC International has also

developed an internal list of 12 behavioral capabilities, shown in Table 3.6, which are essentially the same as those in Table 3.5. Company policy is to have senior managers practicing these behavioral capabilities and, eventually, for the capabilities to flow down through the organization.

Table 3.6 ALTIC Behavioral Competencies.

1. Problem solving	7. Decision making
2. Communication	8. Coaching for maximizing performance
3. Customer focus	9. Planning
4. Delegating	10. Risk taking
5. Influencing/ Leadership	11. Strategic thinking
6. Innovation	12. Teambuilding

Source. Company media material (2003)

Cross Cultural Issues

Although junior management positions in Country Offices at present are usually filled by local employees, expatriate managers are appointed at middle and senior levels across the Asia Pacific region. In addition to these long-term postings, there is considerable movement of Regional Headquarters staff, especially in the logistic and IT areas, to help Country Office staff with customer negotiations, systems development, contractual issues, and implementation (VP Log). Despite this, there is little formal cross-cultural training, except in very specific situations such as an expatriate manager being posted to a senior position in a major market area, where unusual political or cultural issues may arise (Dir HR). Competitive leverage could also be obtained from the depth of cultural knowledge existing in Country Offices, with their differing

management styles and cultures, if formal arrangements for exchange of cultural information were to be established (Holden, 2002), but there is no apparent knowledge management system in place.

Procedures and Policies

The logistics discipline in the organisation is relatively new and, as the VP Log pointed out:

You would have to say that the logistics arm ...on a global basis really came from what has been achieved at the Asia Pacific level which is a few years ahead of what is happening in Europe and the USA..., so we immediately have a conflict in development styling in the sense that logistics in the USA has been centralized, whereas logistics in Asia and Europe has been pretty much decentralized and we are empowering country heads to manage the lot.

Although the decentralized method of operation is now being constrained to some extent by the requirement for Country Offices to refer some major decisions to Regional Headquarters for approval, the project-oriented company culture expects managers at all levels to accept responsibility and display initiative, often as individuals. Dir HR's assessment of individual and team operational procedures was that people would work alone and be personally responsible for their results when working on national (country) accounts, but would work in teams and share collective responsibility for global accounts. Junior managers would be more likely to be personally responsible for national accounts. In discussing this point, VP Log was mildly critical of this emphasis on individual productivity:

In one sense I am looking for a group of people who are very creative, who individually are somewhat brilliant, able to go out and develop business quickly, know how to implement it and are very, very out-come oriented. Having said that, we do not want to develop an organization that is just a bunch of brilliant players who don't know how to pass the ball to one another. So, in time, as the organization matures I see the need for us to put frameworks in place that allows more of a collective vision to be created

ALTIC promotion policy is based on merit, rather than gender or seniority, and from within where possible. This does not always apply in the Asia Pacific region because:

At a regional level Asia/Pacific there is still a level of traditional values in place. I tend to think that as you move down in the organization it is based on technical merit but at senior level it is probably more traditional (VP Log).

Finally, the best way for management to ensure compliance was, in the opinion of the Dir HR, for employees to be given a certain amount of personal freedom in interpreting instructions providing the results did not set back the company. However, the VP Log was a little more cautious:

I think it really depends on the level in the company. The middle to senior level in the company has a significant amount of freedom in interpreting instructions to produce a result at the end of the day but, as we move down the organization, and look for operational execution, certainly in my view the best way is clear and concise SOPs and detail so tight control at the lower levels, much more freedom as we move up the tree.

Conclusion

This case study focuses on the type of environment a graduate could expect to work in when employed by a multi-national company such as ALTIC International. Asia Pacific Region's organizational culture has been categorized as project-oriented, with an overlay of bureaucracy, and *very result oriented* (Dir HR). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) described the characteristics of such a working environment as egalitarian, impersonal, and task-oriented. Although tasks are often undertaken in teams, *culture tends to be individualistic* (p.174) and employees must be self-reliant, and able to adapt to constantly-changing scenarios.

From a management viewpoint, the most important generic capabilities are initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, teamwork, and problem solving skills. Although teamwork is ranked highly, communication skill is ranked lower down the list (5th) by both VP Log and Dir HR. These rankings indicate that senior managers are taking both a short- and long-term view of subordinates' performance. Hence, it is important for graduates to understand that their performance is being assessed not only on what they are doing in their present position, but also on how senior management think they might perform at higher levels. For this reason, it is

unfortunate that company management development programs are so restricted. A well developed mentoring program would go some way towards improving generic capabilities in junior managers, and equipping them for more senior posts.

Although Asia Pacific region comprises a wide range of cultures and Country Offices, the opportunities for graduates to be posted to off-shore, cross-cultural appointments as junior managers appear to be limited, but Dir HR commented that this policy was being modified. From an organizational viewpoint, it is also wasteful of intellectual talent and resources that a formal system of cross-cultural management knowledge transfer has not been put in place. Holden (2002) pointed out that *firms need to acquire, create, and protect tacit knowledge: the knowledge which is in the heads of their employees and embedded in the general organizational context of their work* (p.74). Similarly, Deresky (2000) noted that *communication among far-flung operations can best be managed by setting up feedback systems and liaison people* (p.159). If graduates are to become efficient managers in cross-cultural appointments at later stages in their careers, they must appreciate that being able to *manage this [cultural] diversity is required for getting the job done, whether in daily contact with other colleagues, in cross-functional teams, or in cross-border alliances* (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p.183).

From an organizational perspective, ALTIC could do more to develop generic capabilities in junior managers, and to use cross-cultural management resources that exist in the Country Offices. At the same time, graduates have an individual responsibility for preparing for more senior positions and must accept that various generic capabilities will change as appointments become more senior, and more cross-culturally oriented.

Case Study 2: Hogan and Wilson P/L

Hogan and Wilson is a publicly-listed, large, multi-national organisation producing surgical and optical instruments. Head office is in the USA, and the company employs approximately 11,500 people worldwide, marketing its products in more than 100 countries. Key themes in this case study are multi-national, top-down culture, bureaucratic model, personal accountability, innovation, performance management, collaborative culture, and standard operating procedures.

Company Culture

This organization has been operating for 150 years and, in that time, has developed strong senior management teams operating with a top-down culture in a bureaucratic, role-oriented context. As the Asian Distribution Centre Logistics Director (Dir Log) described it:

Every beginning of the year we meet with the regions [with] probably the top 100 people in each of the regions. We are meeting together to let them know the priorities, probably what are the 4 or 5 top priorities for the year so everybody can go in that direction... Of course we are an American company and we want to have everything clear in the SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures]. That is the best way for the management to ensure compliance to stay clear to follow orders as much as possible.

Apart from senior management directives, internal cultural drivers are personal accountability, doing more with less, and looking for a better way: *think outside the box*. Innovation is important in Hogan and Wilson, and the organisation's vision statement stresses dedication to *continued innovation*. Dir Log uses a surgical analogy to illustrate company approaches to solving problems:

For something important you need to have a laser-like focus. We become very critical, very important we have this laser-like focus because this is as critical as in a surgical laser.

Culture within the organisation is collaborative and open, and candid dialogue between management and subordinates is encouraged to minimize misunderstanding, improve weaknesses and strengths, and create teamwork. The latter is very important, more so than individual achievement:

Of course I think we want to achieve in groups. Individually we have targets, we have objectives that we want to achieve...[but] we work like a team, we want to make a sound support to the commercial sale product team to make sure the supply chain works efficiently (Dir Log).

Gender balance in senior management is good *we have a lot of ladies in executive such as Director or above level. For the six regional directors three of them are women. In the US I think we have more women in the important posts* (Dir Log).

Dir Log's rankings of generic capabilities are shown in Table 3.7. The emphasis on team work and problem solving skills reflects the SCM responsibilities of logistic managers, but initiative and enterprise skills are given a lower ranking than in the previous case study.

Table 3.7 Generic Capabilities Ranking by Dir Log, Asia Distribution Centre, of Hogan & Wilson

Rank	
1	Problem Solving
2	Learning Skills
2	Teamwork
4	Communication Skills
5	Planning and Organising
6	Initiative and Enterprise
7	Technology Skills

Note: Unranked: Self management

Comparisons between Case Study 1 and Case Study 2

These two large, multi-national organisations are similar in size and global reach, but there are important differences in company culture that stem from their history, and from the different market sectors in which they operate. ALTIC is a relatively new organisation, founded in 1972, providing a freight-forwarding and SCM service to its customers. Hogan and Wilson, on the other hand, is a comparatively old organisation, tracing its history back to 1872, and is a producer of high-technology optical and surgical instruments.

Although Hogan and Wilson considered *continued innovation* to be important to their competitive position, in an industry characterized by adherence to strict standards of production and operation, a top down management style has developed *to ensure compliance, to stay clear to follow orders as much as possible* (Dir Log). ALTIC, on the other hand, is a service provider

in a new and still evolving field, with much less established and agreed procedures and standards. How these two different scenarios affect generic capabilities can be seen by comparing the generic capabilities rankings of VP Log (ALTIC) and Dir Log (Hogan & Wilson). Of seven generic capabilities common to both lists (see Tables 3.5 and 3.7), five: communication skills, teamwork, planning and organizing, learning skills, and technology, are similar in priority order. Two, problem solving (ALTIC=4th, Hogan & Wilson= 1st), and initiative and enterprise (ALTIC=1st, Hogan & Wilson=6th), reflect the differing environments in which these organisations operate.

Initiative and enterprise is more valuable in a constantly changing logistic and transport field, where each problem presents a new challenge, and requires a quick response. Problem solving and innovation are more applicable to new product planning and marketing, functions which Hogan and Wilson has been carrying out for 150 years, because time constraints, although important, are not as pressing as in supply chain operations involving global movement of consignments. Finally, despite a similarity in regional organisation, ALTIC Country Offices have more delegated freedom to make management decisions than do their counterparts in the more traditional Hogan and Wilson structure.

From a graduate's perspective, these organisations present two different operational environments. Hogan and Wilson is a traditional MNC, with well established SOPs, and an expectation that staff will solve problems within a framework of established rules and regulations. New employees can expect to work as a junior member of a project team, but will be expected to contribute to development of sustainable solutions. ALTIC, on the other hand, is a much younger and more challenging organisation, and graduates, who will have been selected for their ability to work independently, will be expected to actively use initiative and enterprise to solve problems that may not have arisen previously.

Case Study 3: Benedict Transport Company

Benedict is a large, privately-owned transport company providing a wide range of road transport and logistic services in several Australian cities. There are no international offices but this may change if the company tenders for contracts that require an Australian, New Zealand, or South East Asian commitment. Company culture is project-oriented, overlaid by person-oriented elements. Project orientation is most evident in employees' attitudes to authority, and in relationships between management and staff. New employees are informed, generally, of company expectations, particularly in relation to skills development that contributes to company success. Cross-disciplinary teams with collective responsibility, and appropriate degrees of individual responsibility, handle clients' accounts. Leaders, usually senior managers, ensure that teams work cohesively, and provide consensus results. Honesty, integrity, and openness in negotiations are essential components of company philosophy, and members of the management team, as part of the business family, are expected to observe *family* norms of behaviour. The Managing Director, Benedict's founder, is critical of graduates who use the company as a step towards appointments elsewhere. Although the company has no present plans to expand outside Australia the General Manager (GM), a second generation family member, considers that such a move may be necessary in the future. Key themes to emerge from this case study include person- and project-oriented company culture, innovation, cross-disciplinary teams, collective versus individual responsibilities, and business families.

Background

This company was established in the 1980s by the present Managing Director as a small transport company specializing in local courier services. Since then it has developed into one of the largest privately-owned transport companies in Australia, with branches in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth and a fleet of 500 vehicles, ranging in size from small courier trucks to semi-trailers. Staff numbers have grown to over 400, most of whom are drivers. Benedict's business vision is to be a customer-driven transport company offering a high level of performance, and a wide range of logistic services, to its clients, with an emphasis on personal relationships and open lines of communication.

Company expansion has been rapid since 1995, with branches being started in NSW, Queensland and West Australia. In Sydney and Melbourne the company has developed a new e-commerce system to improve service to its customers. Such a system, with its ability to provide real-time track and trace, electronic proof of delivery and key performance data, is an important tool to increase major customers' competitiveness.

A Family Company

Klein, Astrachan and Smyrnios (2003) pointed out that there is a wide range of definitions in the literature of what constitutes a family business. While earlier definitions concentrated on ownership, family involvement in management, and family culture (Ward, 1987), recent definitions focus on ownership. A recent definition put forward by Nordqvist and Melin, (2002) defined a family company as one in which a family owns a majority of the ordinary shares, is represented on the Board of Management, and where leading members of the family perceive the enterprise to be a family firm. Benedicts meets these criteria because it is *one of the largest privately owned transport companies in Australia* (Company media material), both the Managing Director (MD) and the General Manager (GM) are senior members of the founding family, and the founding family regards the company as a family firm.

Generational change in management and ownership has an important impact on the degree of experience of family members in the business, *more generations, more opportunity for relevant family memory* (Klein et al., 2003, p.6). Ward (1987) considered that family companies can only be considered as such if the intention is for management to be passed on to the next generation, and Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997) pointed out that *succession is the ultimate test of a family business* (p.193). In Benedict's case, future management of the company may not necessarily remain in family hands although ownership might. The MD stated:

Being a member of the family counts for nothing. It might count for ownership but it does not entitle [a family member] to a say, to a position of prime influence in the business... It's our clients, it's our staff, who actually sort out whether or not this person is on the right track.

In this case, the son of the MD is the GM, and would appear to be the logical contender to take over the MD's role when the present incumbent steps down. However, the position adopted by the MD raises the possibility that a more qualified senior manager could be considered. In a more general application, it seems to represent a policy of only giving family members employment if they are qualified for the role.

Such a policy has potential to cause tension within the next generation, as family-related hierarchical and seniority issues not associated with actual business impinge on business decisions. Whilst family members may find such situations unpleasant, they at least are familiar with the non-business background that precipitated the problem. Non-family managers and employees, on the other hand, may lack knowledge of the non-business factors influencing the case, as demonstrated by Deresky's (2000) comment, in the international family business context, that:

Foreign managers often find themselves locked out of important decisions when dealing with family business. If, however, they take the time to learn the local cultural expectations regarding families, they will notice predictable patterns of behavior and be better prepared to deal with them (p. 112).

Benedict Company Culture

Benedict's culture is described by the GM as:

... delivering collective success. Really what we say to our customers is the best outcome for the customers, providing it is reasonable and allows us to make a profit, is the best outcome for us, so that is what we mean by delivering collective success. There is a long process involved in doing that [but] that would be underlying factor in the culture.

The organisation sees its strength as an ability to deliver collective success internally and externally. Internally, the emphasis is on team work and communication, and the MD's position on this is clear:

Teamwork skill is almost a foregone conclusion with me. If I can't see in the first ten minutes that some one has team work attitude and a high level of communication it doesn't matter if they have great planning and organizational skills, it doesn't matter what their knowledge and experience is like, that's not going to matter.

Externally, teamwork and good communications are equally important in Benedicts' relationships with its customers, and on how employees follow through on those relationships. This philosophy is based on family values of honesty, integrity and fair-dealing. However, the MD accepts that company culture must change as customer needs and expectations change, *albeit not sacrificing the basic principles [of] honesty, integrity, and negotiation.*

The importance of good relationships with customers, particularly long-term ones, influences the GM's policy on interpretation of contractual conditions:

We do not [insist on a deal is a deal] ...because it might appeal to you to hold your line where it is to your advantage, but the day will come when it is to your disadvantage, so we are very much concerned with building relationships, and having a flexible arrangement.

Managers or Entrepreneurs

Despite the company's impressive growth in the domestic market since 1982, it has not yet ventured into the international area, in part, because the MD believes that *there is enough in this market, in the Australian market, the national market, for me, for us, that I can see at this stage.*

This statement appears to rule out any move into the international market in the immediate future. However, it is a possible long-term option, as the GM expressed an opinion that:

We might have to tender that for Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia, and might break it up into those units so in time, yes, but at the moment no, we don't really want it [international markets]. It might be a necessary evil again for us to grow, we want to be a major supplier.

The GM's longer-term perspective, implying a future change in business direction, demonstrates a different interpretation of the interface of management and entrepreneurship ideology to that of the MD. Johannisson (2002) suggested that little attention had been paid *to the friction energy that is produced when the different ideologies interface* (p.48), and how such energy might contribute to family-business vitality.

Another aspect of differing approaches to strategic planning on the part of the MD and the GM is in the use of technology, specifically information technology. Whilst the GM believes that *technology changes the culture*, the MD, while generally agreeing, adds a qualification that *it does as long as you keep the major ingredients, honesty, and integrity*. In other words, regardless of technological change, Benedicts has a culture that is underpinned by a set of family values that should not change.

Blood Family or Business Family

The emotional climate in an organisation can be described as affective (emotional) or neutral (non-emotional) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). A family company; such as Benedict, could be expected to exhibit aspects of the affective approach in its human resource management policies. An example of this is the MD's view that:

People who cannot progress beyond a certain level, sure there are niches where you can place people to do the job and do that well, as long as you counsel them and say I think you have gone as far as you can go but we are very happy with you there, you have been doing a great job, and call on their expertise if need be in that niche area.

A similarly affective approach to human resources as a major asset is also evident in this discussion between the MD and GM:

GM. They (management staff at various levels) exist in a family environment, they are part of the level of management. In here we are all part of family versus the family business concern.

MD. We are not talking about blood family, we are talking about business, we are embracing [the manager involved] as son or daughter, whatever might be.

Although a distinction is drawn between blood family and business family, relationships with non-blood, business family staff are described in conventional parent and child (emotive) terms. Such an affective approach may not necessarily be welcomed by younger, ambitious graduates who are not family members, and who are impatient to progress quickly in the logistics profession.

An alternative way of looking at an emotive or neutral company environment is to consider it in terms of specific or diffuse relationships (Trompennar & Hampden-Turner, 2002). In a specific relationship, management/employee contact is restricted to work issues only, but, in a diffuse situation, companies take a far broader interest in their employees' welfare. That a diffuse relationship exists in Benedicts is indicated by the GM's comment that:

And starting the family business as we are what we really are, we do run our shifts pretty lean. We do not have the luxury of other peoples' money, the public companies' sort of attitudes, so we have to make sure that the people we are recruiting in our business have some longevity with them which means we give them more focus, more attention, more guidance and work harder with them.

The MD is very critical of graduates who joined the company *to find out where they really want to be* and he feels *that is a pretty expensive way unless you get real value from them at the beginning*. He is also frustrated about Benedict's lack of success in retaining young women graduates:

We've given a lot of young ladies opportunities within the organisation but for some reason or another they decide that transport is really not for them, or transport in the form that we operate which is land transport ...[equivalent] to say we don't want to be here, we want to be somewhere else.

One reason for this is a difference between young graduates' specific career expectations, and the family's broader expectations. The GM is not impressed by the attitude of some young graduates:

That's the impatience that you deal with all the time, they want to be a boss at 30, and rich at 25 ...they can still do great things but they do not understand that they need to become part

of the whole network before they can actually use their imagination and enthusiasm to drive them forward. It might be a short spell but they still need to go to the bottom rungs and then say right, I understand that and I've got that and my educational skills, now I'll go on from here and that process can take 6 or 12 months. They are too impatient they want to apply the degree of the knowledge almost straight away and it does not work like that.

Another aspect of company culture is senior management's expectation of how new staff fit into the family company. A clear policy statement on this is given to staff on joining. As the MD explained:

When anybody starts we tell them this is what we want you to do, this is how we expect you will go about doing that, and don't ask us about the other 30% that is up to you, that's the innovation. We will give you plenty room to move but that is where we want you to head, we want you to cover these disciplines and at the end of that we want you to be skilled in these areas so we can get you to represent our business in these particular skills there. So it is pretty clear isn't it?

This second expectation is straightforward, giving new staff explicit guidelines about what is, and what is not, acceptable in Benedicts. It is the first issue, the balancing of a new graduate's ambition against the family's view that new business members need to learn from the bottom up, which seems to cause most problems, both for management and for new staff.

In summary, a picture emerges of a company that places a great deal of emphasis on relationships built up over a long period of time, based on family principles of honesty, integrity, and negotiation. Teamwork and collective work ethic is seen as the way to success, and is part of the company vision. The present MD is not a supporter of the policy of employing family members merely because they are family; they must also measure up to staff and client expectations. Graduates joining this company need to be well aware that they are becoming part of a *business family*, as well as a family business, and that they will be expected to absorb behavioral values that such an arrangement implies. An attitude of regarding work in the company merely as a temporary-way station to something else will be neither welcome nor

tolerated. This latter situation applies in other large companies as well, but without the degree of broader loyalty to the family that is expected in a company such as Benedict.

Ranking of Generic Capabilities

Rankings of generic capabilities by the GM and MD of Benedict are shown in Table 3.8. These rankings indicate the importance both managers placed on communication skills and problem solving. Teamwork was considered by the GM to be closely allied with, and almost indistinguishable from, communication.

Table 3.8 Generic Capabilities Rankings by GM and MD of Benedict Transport

Rank	GM	Rank	MD
1	Problem Solving	1	Communication
2	Communication	2	Initiative and Enterprise
2	Teamwork	3	Problem Solving
4	Technology	4	Planning and Organising
5	Learning skills	5	Teamwork
6	Self Management	6	Self Management
7	Initiative and Enterprise	7	Learning Skills
Unranked:	Planning and Organising	8	Technology

Conclusion

Two key issues emerge from this case study. The first is the differing views of two senior managers on the priority of specific generic capabilities, and the second the expectations that both managers share of people working in their *business family*.

Generic Capabilities. Both managers place a great deal of importance on communication, and problem solving. The GM stressed that he would not consider an applicant who did not display

high levels of team skills and communication ability, regardless of what other skills were demonstrated. Team work did not rank as highly in the MD's list, compared with initiative and enterprise. Graduates joining this company under the present culture can expect to be working in a traditional, affective environment where they will be given opportunity to grow, but within a very structured framework. Under an organisation headed by the GM, the environment is likely to be more entrepreneurial and technologically-oriented, and changes will occur more rapidly.

Key Family Expectations. This is an area where there is a broad basis of agreement between MD and GM. Main issues are that new graduates are expected to be patient, and accept that there is a six month- to one- year learning period when graduates start at the *bottom of the pile*, as the GM put it. This business family requires a degree of loyalty that means members do not leave after a short period, and are not using the firm just as a stepping stone to bigger and better appointments. Managers are expected to contribute to collective, as well as individual, success, and time is required to understand how the company relates to its customers, and to absorb distinctive features of family culture. It is this unique blending of family and work values that distinguishes Benedict's culture from that of its competitors, but is also a feature that some graduates find difficult to accept.

At present this culture is strong because the two senior managers are family members. In the future, this may change depending on whether the next generation of senior managers comes from the family, or from industry generally, and on the extent of control through ownership that the family continues to exert. However, in the short term, graduates joining Benedicts must realize that they are joining a business family rather than just a business, and so expect the hierarchical structure, and loyalty expectations, that such an arrangement demands.

Case Study 4: Cranston Transport Services

Cranston Transport Services is a large family company, with extensive road and rail operations, based in Melbourne with branches in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, and Darwin. This organisation, specializing in container freight, is a major domestic logistics service provider, and

has no strategic aim to be an international operator except, perhaps, for some limited involvement in New Zealand. Key themes in this case are business family, domestic operator, new management, expansion, open communication, social barriers, and social obligations.

Company Culture

This organisation is a traditional family company with a strong person-orientation. Senior management works hard at maintaining a *business family* culture that has developed since the present Managing Director founded the company in 1974. However, over the previous five years, the number of personnel employed by Cranston has increased from 300 to 580 employees and contractors and, as a result, employees' sense of belonging to a *business family* has dissipated to some extent. Time and effort is now being expended in regenerating this. As a Director (Dir) of the company, a son of the founder, commented when discussing a training program that Cranston had recently conducted for 86 management staff:

I think that [the course] will be something that we will reap rewards from in years to come and that is getting back to [Cranston] being a family company so we have good culture but it is something as we get bigger we need to spend a lot more time nurturing it.

Cranston has strong sense of social responsibility, and there are programs in place to employ, and develop, young employees who would otherwise not be employable in the transport industry:

We do internal traineeships, I have got 4 people in Melbourne, 2 of them came from Welfare and did traineeships and still both working here. The year after that I took on two more kids on our internal trainee program (Dir).

Relationships between management and employees in Cranston conform more to a *diffuse* than to a *specific* model (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002), as is demonstrated by Dir's policy to retain good staff by rotating them through different appointments.

I want to develop and nurture people internally and promote them internally and bring more people in at different stages and have everybody stay and have everybody move up through the company ... so we are very big on highlighting and understanding peoples' skills and

abilities, and constructing career paths with them to hone their skills to hold their interests so they don't leave.

There is no intergenerational friction in the senior management group, and emphasis is on open communication from senior management down to the work floor, and on a breaking down of social barriers between white-collar and blue-collar employees. Senior management believes it has an obligation to employ and nurture less-advantaged young workers, and has mentoring programs in place to do this:

I think people work better when they are mentored by someone. I think [a] mentor is the most important catalyst for anyone to grow, if you are working in group (Dir).

Cranston also has an expectation that employees will have a stable work record, and intend to stay with the company:

I [Dir] am looking for someone who has been identified in that [previous employer's] organization as a dedicated, efficient, go-getter that wants to learn, wants to progress, and that's what I want, I don't want 2 years, 3 years fly-by-nighters. By the time that I have trained them up, and got them familiar with what we do, who we are, and why we do, it they have gone.

Dir agreed that most of Cranston's present senior management fitted the description 'male, middle aged, and selected for their positions because of their background and experience' because that has traditionally been the industry model. However, he believes that:

There are becoming [sic] more and more women in the industry, we in this organization select people on both their background and experience and their technical proficiency...our managers can be 30 years old, 30, 35 years old, 40 years old managing people that are older than them and have been in our company for longer, whereas 10 years ago, that wouldn't have been the case, it was a progression of age and experience because it was a different industry. Back then it was very much an operations- based industry only, now we try to add value as supply chain efficiency and IT.

In terms of organisational policy, Cranston is concerned with developing good relationships with its customers *the people down here look after the customer and I look after them and I think that is what the relationship in transport is about*. As an extension of this policy, this organisation does not subscribe to "a deal is a deal" policy *provided the deal isn't reneged on at the eleventh hour* (Dir).

Table 3.9 shows Dir's ranking of generic capabilities. Although technology skills are unranked they are an essential prerequisite for employment, and form the basis of the first of two interviews. In the second interview, Dir and a Human Resources manager assess a potential employee's soft skills in the priority shown in Table 3.9. With regard to teamwork, a characteristic which is regarded very highly in this company, Dir commented:

I think it [teamwork] is important but I think it is very difficult to ascertain in interviews whether someone works well in the team, so that is something that you can really see when they start to work with other people

Table 3.9 Generic Capabilities Ranking by the Dir, Cranston Transport Services

Rank	
1	Problem Solving
2	Communication
2	Teamwork
4	Initiative and Enterprise
5	Planning and Organising
6	Self Management
7	Learning Skills

Note: Unranked: Technology

Implications for graduates working in an organisation such as Cranston are that they will be in a family-type organisation where:

The leader of the family-style culture weaves the pattern, sets the tone, models the appropriate posture for the corporation, and expects subordinates to be "on the same

wavelength", knowing intuitively what is required; conversely, the leader may empathize with the subordinates (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p.159).

Such a paternalistic framework puts more emphasis on communications and problem-solving, within an accepted family framework, than on initiative and enterprise. Graduates will find that working in such a company provides a supportive and nurturing environment for development, but, as one MD in another case study (Greythorpe) commented *it can also be not necessarily the best environment for people to grow their own independent skills*, and so may not provide the challenges and opportunity for growth that would encourage more ambitious younger managers to stay for the length of time that senior management anticipates. From a graduate's viewpoint this balance of individual challenge, and opportunity to advance to more senior positions, versus the *perception that senior positions in the organisation are unchallengeable in the sense that [they do] not depend on tasks performed but on status ascribed* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p.161), is a difficult problem to overcome and *even if management has been passed largely to professional non-family executives, the family's control of ownership marks the seat of ultimate power in the system* (Daily & Dollinger, 1992, p.195). In such a situation, graduates are more likely to regard appointments in Cranston as a point their progression towards senior management positions in large public organisations, rather than as a long term career prospect.

Comparison between Case Study 3 and Case Study 4

These two companies are very similar in size and culture. Benedict has a more diversified operation and, hence, exhibits more of a project orientation than does Cranston. Both organisations see their market as national rather than international. Generic capability rankings are similar, as is the expectation that employees joining their companies intend to remain for a number of years, rather than moving on after two or three years. In both cases, company culture is more *diffuse* than *specific*, and employees are expected to conform to a set of ethical standards that, although being seen as part of a *business family* relationship, appear to stem from standards of behaviour espoused by the founders of both organisations. Cranston has a stronger sense of social obligation for employing socially-disadvantaged workers than is evident in Benedict.

Case Study 5: McCabe Logistics

McCabe Logistics is the largest privately owned supply chain solution provider in the Asia Pacific, with branches in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, and Thailand. Although a family company, organizational culture is more role- than person-oriented. Strategic planning, on a company-wide basis, has only been in place since about 2001 and prior to that, long-term planning was a prerogative of the CEO. Management policy is based on a top-down, short-term reporting basis, and there is little consultative management in place at present, although some senior managers accept that more needs to be done to improve this aspect of operations. International employees appear to have less difficulty with this management style than do Australian employees. There is also a feeling in some areas of senior management that women managers do not perform well in operational transport appointments. Key themes in this case study are private ownership, contract distribution, SCM, top-down management, consultative management, international employees, operational management, and short-term reporting focus.

Background

McCabe Logistics is a large privately-owned 3PL service provider with 9000 employees, and a fleet of over 4000 vehicles. Initially a road transport company, McCabe became a contract distribution organisation because of its skill in handling industrial relations problems. When the Australian industrial scene changed in the 1990s, the company switched to an integrated logistic service provider role and, subsequently, entered the SCM field.

Company Culture

In terms of the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) model, McCabe's cultural orientation is short-term, project-oriented and so differs from the person-orientation of a traditional family company. Since its inception this organisation has enjoyed continued and impressive growth, due initially to the acumen and drive of the founder, to a series of well-planned acquisitions of major competitors, and to business skills of senior management. Strategic planning has only been

implemented on a company-wide basis since about 2001 under a new Group Managing Director, who has now (2005) left the organisation. Company management style is very much top-down, and there is little consultative culture. In discussing this aspect of company culture, a Director (Dir) commented:

I guess the problem we've got is that we have defined about ten years ago what we think our culture should be like, we defined what our culture is like and the two are not the same at the moment. We actually have a set of values that include such things as honesty, can do attitude, respect for other opinions, things like that, that we believe we want to move towards. Our culture at the moment is not quite there, our culture at the moment is a very top down type culture. That comes from the senior levels, it is very much one of saying this is how I want you to do it and this is how you will do it, rather than a consultative culture saying what is the best way to do it.

He also made the point that this culture was a legacy from the way the founder had operated and that *people who try to buck that do not get very far*. Although the company is *very project oriented, absolutely project-oriented, we focus essentially on the bottom line, and on a very short-term bottom line focus too*, project-orientation in this case is not the project team concept noted by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002), but rather a tactical concentration on tasks in hand to ensure a firm control of revenue flow. As Dir pointed out, managers are required to meet stringent, weekly reporting arrangements:

Basically these guys have got to deliver those weekly results, and if the results start slipping on a weekly basis, they know they are really going to be attacked until they fix it...we really were not spending much time at all thinking about the future, thinking strategically...Now we are starting to change that, but still at our individual business level, people still focus basically on what am I going to do this week, how am I going to do it?

The founder's rationale for insisting on short-term planning was made clear in an interview in 1991. When asked what his message was for anyone currently in the field of logistics wanting to get on in his company, he responded that they should get out of logistics because a logistic manager with innovative views would be seen as a threat, and *it takes the broader, more long-*

term view of the chief executive to really address change (Day, 1991). In line with this approach, Dir explained that;

...when [the founder] was very closely associated with business, he was thinking strategically about where he is going and although he never actually conveyed that to anybody, he was moving down a fairly well planned route. Everybody else's task was to actually make what had been done work.

Although logistics and SCM have assumed much higher importance in organizational planning since the 1980s (Coyle, Bardi, & Langley, 2003), management culture in this company does not appear to have changed much since 1991. Only in the previous three or four years has the organization started to carry out true strategic planning, a development initiated by a new Group Managing Director, and an example of a professionally-oriented management decision (Harbison & Myers, 1977). When asked why it had taken McCabe so long to realize that change was needed, Dir replied:

Because what we have been working for years, we have been working on a very specific formula that involved getting contract distribution and invariably we did the work because industrially the people we were working for could not handle it... and then as the industrial climate in Australia changed that aspect of what we have had to offer became far less important, so what we were doing had to change.

Off Shore Operations and Cultural Differences

Apart from Australia, McCabe has branches in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, New Zealand, and Thailand. A European office was closed because that region was too highly competitive, and because Asia offered greater strategic advantages. International management staff include a number of expatriate personnel, but *we are trimming that back because strong local managers are preferred when they are available. By numbers, most of our Asian management staff are locals* Although organisational practices off-shore are the same as in Australia, two McCabe staff surveys conducted in the previous three and a half years showed that *the level of staff satisfaction in Asia is significantly higher than in Australia* (Dir).

Although a strong bottom line focus, evident in the company since its formation, applies in Asia as much as anywhere else, relationships between off-shore senior management and their local employees set it apart from its competitors:

Well I think our culture is different in Asia, our culture even though is very top down culture, is the far more consultative culture than you'll find in Asia, and it's a culture where people at the top are quite happy to talk to people at the bottom and at least exchange ideas, and in Asian terms the people at the bottom I think probably feel they have far more opportunities to influence what happens at the top, simply because they are able to talk to people, than our people in Australia (Dir).

Personnel Development

Personnel development aspects may be considered under two headings, potential for junior management to make decisions and to advance in the company, and extent and value of training that the company provides to its staff.

Ability of the junior managers to make operational decisions is restricted, as they are expected to conform to a rigorous weekly objective financial reporting system, and are constrained in what they can and cannot do because of the hierarchical nature of the organization. The structure of the organization means that middle- and senior-ranking managers are in position for a long time.

In Asia, a problem is finding good local managers because, as soon as they are trained, they are likely to start their own business, or go to work for another firm. This is in marked comparison with operations in Australia where:

A lot of our senior people have been in the company for long time, most of the general managers have been with the company 5 or 7 years. We do have a reasonable level of turnover at the lower ranks but I think one of the reasons for that is because people determine that there is less chance of them progressing up the line (Dir)

Another reason for this turnover of junior managers, in the company's opinion, is that McCabe staff are well regarded in the logistics industry, and so are attractive prospects for employers to head-hunt.

An important aspect of staff development as a retention mechanism is the value employees place on in-company training they receive (Bonache & Cervino, 2003). Asian staff are brought to Australia for training, and this is a very attractive option for them, but Australian staff do not seem to place the same value on the training available. The company is not sure why, perhaps because:

The approach here is the same but people do not see it quite as well as people up in Asia...whereas in Asia a person might feel that opportunities are created for them, they are learning stuff, a lot less people think that down here, maybe because they are all already at the level that we try to develop our Asian people too (Dir).

Retention of women managers is a problem in this organisation with its strongly operationally-oriented culture, as the following comment indicates:

[We have] had some very good ones [women managers] as site and regional managers.[A] good ex-Army woman left-no advancement. [There are] no women at senior level in McCabe, a number of operational people don't see women in that [operational] role. Main reason is industrial-[some senior managers] don't see a woman arguing with a driver at 5 o'clock in the morning because he doesn't want to get in his truck (Dir).

This operational perception that women are not comfortable in these types of potentially-antagonistic industrial relations issues was perhaps because *senior people are less willing to give them a chance at it*. As operational experience is important for promotion in this company, *we hesitate before putting somebody directly into an operational manager's role if they did not have any operational management (Dir)*, young, ambitious, women graduates move into other organisations where their opportunities for advancement are brighter.

Generic Capabilities Ratings

A combination of the first three key skills, communication, teamwork, and problem solving, is most important because *it is essential to get people working together*, and teamwork cannot exist without good communications *probably verbal more important than written*, and Asian managers were *quite comfortable with verbal, and quite capable with written, communications*.

The other five key skills were all important, *technology skills you have to have, computer skills, this is a given. [As for the others] the more [skills] you have, the bigger the bonus* (Dir).

In assessing managers for overseas appointments, the company first establishes that the individual concerned does not *have a racist attitude. Amazing how many people get into Asia with real racial problems.* The other priority is to:

Manage their expectations about what they are working with. Quality of people is not what you expect them to be. [We] can develop them to that. McCabe have developed fantastic locals-brought them to Australia for training [but we] cannot assume that same level of training exists in Asia (Dir).

Conclusion

This case study indicates several areas that may present difficulties for new graduates joining the organisation. These potential difficulties stem mainly from the culture of the organization, particularly senior management perceptions of women managers' suitability for operational positions, and a preoccupation with short-term reporting systems enforced with an aggressive top-down style.

Organizational Culture. Data presented in this case study, and the founder's interview comments in 1991, indicate a hierarchical and rigid organization with very little in the way of consultative process. A culture which acknowledges that managers *will be attacked until they fix it* represents an extreme example of top-down management. Two reviewers, commenting on views put forward by McCabe's founder in his 1991 interview, said:

It is important to understand the complexities of the job, but it is just as important to understand such questions as, "what business are we in", or, "who are our customers" or, "where do we want to be in five years time?" It is unfortunate that the trouble with experience is that we get the test before we get the lesson. We would venture to say that [McCabe's founder] has been fortunate that he began his company in a competitive environment which is more forgiving than we are in today (Chorn & Gattorna, 1991, p.47).

This culture is changing, but slowly. As a result, some junior managers do not see this company as a long term career prospect, and feel that better promotion prospects exist elsewhere.

Obstacles to Change There are two obstacles to culture change, and to implementation of a more consultative, and therefore more staff-productive, environment in McCabe. One is the continuing influence of the belief that only senior management have a global view which can chart the organization's strategic vision. Attitude of senior, long standing managers to middle- and junior-ranking managers is the other obstacle. A more consultative and flexible culture may not stop completely the high turnover of junior staff, especially women, but would improve employees' perception of senior management, and provide a wider spectrum of input to the strategic planning processes

This company has achieved much in the fifty years of its existence. However the top-down culture that has predominated for so long, and management policy on women in management roles, are factors which many graduates might find difficult to accept.

Case Study 6: Darragh Global Services

Darragh Global Services, a large, private company operating in the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and the Asia Pacific, is based in Hong Kong with 4000 staff in over 40 different countries. The organisation was established in Japan in 1963 as a transport company specializing in international removals, moved to Hong Kong in 1978, and now offers relocation, records management, and logistics services to clients. Key themes in this case are family company, person-oriented, decentralized, collaboration, information flows, controlling owner paradigm, paternalistic, and cultural awareness.

Company Culture

Culture in Darragh is influenced by the global nature of its operations. Global company management is decentralised, with an emphasis on collaboration. Although, in terms of disposal

of profits, this organisation is characterized by a controlling-owner paradigm (Gersick et al., 1997), in operational areas individual branches are managed independently and managers make decisions based on local conditions. Branch offices are supported by a number of staff offices such as marketing, finance, and strategic planning, which are centrally coordinated by Darragh Head office in Hong Kong. Country General Managers have considerable influence on management culture in their regions because, Darragh's Finance Director (Dir Fin) in Hong Kong explained:

I would say it [Darragh's management style] was a paternalistic type of management because the culture from the company leaders depends on the type of management style adopted in the various countries. I would think that the European offices and US offices may not be the same kind of management as the five major Hong Kong and China [offices], so it depends on the country manager, he decides this kind of management style. Some are very light kind of management, some are paternalistic type and very different.

Darragh's founder provides overall company vision and direction, and management style is top down, with compliance relying on clear and detailed instructions, supplemented by a well established information flow upwards as well as downwards. Senior managers are male, middle-aged, and selected because of background and experience. In the Asian region, lack of senior women managers appears to stem from a cultural attitude:

Not discrimination. The service industry really relies on general managers to run the entire company so I think in the HK environment we should not have any senior women managers (Dir Fin).

Women were also considered to have difficulty in reconciling the needs of customers and company operational staff *on one hand she tries to please the customer and on the other hand she is unable to please the right internal people (Dir Fin).*

Given Darragh's size, and Country Managers' ability to impose national cultures on regional organisations, company culture as a whole is role-oriented and bureaucratic, with an overlay of person-oriented culture from Head Office. Relationships with customers are flexible, without

emphasis on *a deal is a deal* because *we are in a service industry and it is a kind of personal thing especially with the customer* (Dir Fin).

The value of cultural diversity has been recognized, and the company mission statement emphasizes *one philosophy, one culture*. One of the services offered to clients is a cross-cultural and language training program tailored to meet individual needs. As Dir Fin explained, when asked how the Hong Kong office trained managers to deal with customers of other cultures:

Well, sometimes we will hold a conference getting the old hands, more experienced officers, to give us ideas on how to service your customers globally. So we invite a lot of them from the American and European offices so they can get together and share their experience, a kind of interactive thing, because it is quite different when you take an ex pat [expatriate manager] dealing with our local people—it's quite different.

Generic capability rankings are shown in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10 Generic Capabilities Ranking by Dir Fin of Darragh Global Services

Rank	
1	Technology Skills
2	Problem Solving Skills
2	Planning and Organising Skills
4	Learning Skills
5	Self management Skills
6	Communication Skills
7	Initiative and Enterprise Skills
8	Teamwork Skills

Dir Fin added that innovation, was important in Darragh because *at the end of the day we have to differentiate, with different systems for different customers*, and that negotiating skills to develop partnerships and long term relationships on a global basis were also necessary. If markets are restricted to local territory *it is then very difficult to generate your business because you have to rely on your agents in an office in a different cultural place*. Finally, Hong Kong office recruits

foreign expatriates in addition to local staff because *a foreign person can understand what a foreign customer wants* (Dir Fin).

Graduates joining this organisation would be faced with a number of different management styles, depending on which country they were based. As Dir Fin pointed out, although overall management style was paternalistic, *it depends on the country manager as he decides the type of management style*. However, if technology skills are excluded on the grounds that some respondents classed them as an essential prerequisite to gaining an employment interview rather than one of a number of capabilities to be ranked in the interview, Darragh's top four rankings include two generic capabilities (problem solving and learning skills) which were also included in the top four rankings of another Hong Kong-based MNC, Hogan & Wilson. This implies that, as for Hogan and Wilson, Darragh's management culture is top-down, and junior managers are expected to be innovative, and to solve problems within an established organisational procedural framework, with emphasis placed on learning from more experienced and senior managers.

Comparisons between Case Study 5 and Case Study 6

Both case studies deal with large, privately-owned, organisations operating on either an international or multi-national scale. McCabe Logistics has been operating since 1956, and Darragh Global Services since 1963 although, in its present form, it has only been in existence since 1978 following a break-up of the original partnership. Although each is owned by a family, with family members in senior management positions, organisational culture is task- rather than person-oriented, in a bureaucratic context, and management is top down. Darragh works through a network of country offices, and organisational culture in each of the three regions: Americas; Europe, Middle East and Africa; and Asia Pacific; is strongly influenced by Country General Managers. McCabe, on the other hand, has the same organisational culture both in Australia and overseas, reflecting the views of its founder.

Both organisations provide logistic services, but in different industry sectors. McCabe has maintained a short-term reporting system to monitor and control cost and revenue flow, although this is slowly changing to a more long-term strategic model. Darragh has a longer-term view,

offers a broader range of services, and recognises and values cultural diversity. Although McCabe brings Asian managers to Australia for training, there is no indication that cultural knowledge is disseminated throughout the company.

Relationships between employees and senior management are cultivated in Darragh, especially by the founder, but company surveys in McCabe have indicated a level of employee dissatisfaction amongst Australian staff, and there is a high turnover of junior managers. Although both organisations have a policy of collaborative management, this has not yet been achieved in McCabe, and in Darragh tends to vary according to local management culture. Employment of women managers in senior operational appointments is not common in either organisation, either because of cultural difficulties in Asia, or a perception by senior management that operational logistic management is not a role that most women managers handle well.

Generic capability rankings by Finance Director, Greater China of Darragh Global Services, and by a senior Director of McCabe show a wide variance in rankings of a number of capabilities. Both agree on the criticality of technology skills, and on the importance of problem solving, but rankings of the other capabilities diverge considerably. These ranking differences are influenced by both the different services these companies provide to their clients, by each Director's area of responsibility, and, most of all, by a strong individualistic culture of responsibility and accountability in McCabe, and a more paternalistic and collective culture in Darragh.

Case Study 7: Harrington Holdings

Harrington Holdings, one of Australia's largest logistics providers, has experienced rapid growth since the early 1990s, and now operates in Australia, Thailand, and New Zealand. It is essentially a land transport operation (road 40%, rail 30%) with lesser emphasis on air, maritime, and warehousing. A collaborative, project-oriented culture exists, strongly influenced by the vision of founding members of the company, the present Managing and Executive Directors. Although the personalities of other senior managers are very different, they all share the same vision of Harrington being pre-eminent in the logistic industry. Employees are expected to make their own decisions without prescriptive regulations about how they should do so, and the emphasis is always on the bottom line, personal productivity, and corporate success. Although company cultural style has some similarity to a large family, there are also significant differences, because diversity in personality is accepted and the organization is less concerned about whether employees conform to a family model than about the result produced. Relationships with suppliers and customers are important but, generally, a deal is a deal. To succeed in Harrington, graduates need very strong problem solving, communication, initiative, and teamwork skills. A potential weakness in the organization is the number of separate operating divisions, and a lack of any formal organizational induction. Key themes in this case study are collaboration, project-orientation, growth through acquisition, company common vision, personal productivity, relationships, and *a deal is a deal* philosophy.

Background

This case study concentrates on the organizational culture of Harrington Holdings, one of Australia's largest transport and logistics service providers. The extent to which senior management culture influences this organization's expectations of its employees, and of the generic capabilities required to meet such expectations, is also discussed.

Harrington has experienced rapid growth since the early 1990s and, as a result of acquisitions and joint ventures, branches have been established in Australia, Thailand, and New Zealand. Operations in Thailand were part of the acquisition of another mid-level Australian company

which also had off-shore representation in China. Consistent with their cautious attitude to international markets, Harrington decided to close the China operation. Despite this apparently broad base, the organization is essentially a land transport operation (road 40%, Rail 30%) with lesser emphasis on air, maritime, and warehousing, with about 15,000 employees operating approximately 25,000 pieces of equipment.

Work Hard, Play Hard, and Make Money

Company culture, is described by General Manager, Human Resources (GM HR) as:

[Company culture] is collaborative ...if we talk about the personality of the company ... that is the operational focus. It is certainly profit oriented in terms of bottom line focus and customer focus, takes a very practical approach to things. So we are a logistics company, a company which provides logistics solutions, and that is what we are about, and we do that in a practical way so the organization is often not big on blue sky and theoretical, and we are very practical.

Although Harrington has a long history, the original organisation being founded in 1888, the present company is a result of a management buy-out in 1986, and company culture is strongly influenced by the vision of two founding members of that company, now the Managing and the Executive Directors. Adler (2002) considered senior management influence is one of the characteristics of culture generally: *Culture is therefore something... Older members of a group try to pass on to younger members (p.1)*, and in Harrington GM HR considered that:

It [the company culture] is something that is a product of leadership personality that has just evolved as distinct from being manufactured. The people who lead [the company] are people who know their business so they are not theorists, they are operators, and the senior leaderships... are very different... in terms of their personality but their relationship is such a good one because they are very complementary, they share a common vision and seem to have shared that common vision now for quite some years and their approaches, their personalities are different but their vision is the same ...work hard, play hard and make money does tend to probably describe a lot of the place.

Leadership style in Harrington has produced a culture with some similarities to that of a large family, but there are also significant differences, notably in the degree of entrepreneurial flair that employees are expected to display.

It is a family which actually appreciates diversity in terms of personality. It is not about whether your personality conforms...it is about the result you produce...because it is the culture, the personality approach and the people that we have, the leaders that we have, are to a person very people-orientated so they are strong operational people that have operational focus but they also very people-oriented and I often say that even the ones who think they are not, they are. I mean we haven't got anybody in the senior management team that in my opinion doesn't struggle with hard people issues (GM HR).

The Harrington environment is one where people are expected to make their own decisions in the context of a general direction to go and make a lot of money, without a great number of prescriptive regulations about how they should do so. It is not a place for managers with high-uncertainty levels (Hofstede, 1980) who seek constant guidance from superiors. Although there are formal codes of conduct and principles of governance, and the organization prides itself on its occupational health and safety and personnel policies, the ethical basis for the way Harrington operates is more modeled on an example set by senior management:

Again within the personality of the company there is the way you operate, you can't stipulate in the handbooks and codes of conduct and all those sort of things, that is better demonstrated by how the leaders behave in terms of their ethical values (GM HR).

This ethical perspective impacts significantly on inter-personal relationships within the organization, and on relationships with customers and suppliers. Although Harrington places a high value on customer relationship, an operational focus on the bottom line is dominant. Discussing contractual policy, and the extent to which flexibility would be displayed in interpreting contracts, GM HR said:

I think a deal is the deal because [it works] from the other side as well ...as part of actual relationships with us the contract may become more flexible, I mean there are circumstances where that can happen, but generally speaking I expect the deal is the deal.

Harrington is a very large and dynamic organization with a strong emphasis on self-management and initiative. In such an environment there is little room, or time, for an affective approach, and relationships seem to be expressed in a neutral, non-emotional way. If there is an element of emotion, it is about the organisation itself, rather than about individuals. As might be expected, the extent to which this organization intrudes into employees' private life spaces seems very limited, and so is a specific relationship model (Trompenars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). In relation to characteristics of senior management, *most (are) male, middle aged managers and selected for their position because of their background and experience, but they are also technically proficient if they want to stay* (GM HR).

The image that emerges is of an organization with a clear view of where it wants to go, as evidenced by a company compliance policy accurately setting out the founders' vision. A strong senior management team is seen by junior employees as the model for acceptable behavior in the work environment. Staff are expected to carry out their tasks with minimum management guidance and, although there is a flexible approach to the way people perform their roles, deviation from the company vision, or non-productivity, is not tolerated. The extent to which this flexible approach has succeeded can be judged by this organization's outstanding growth over the past decade.

Strategy and Vision

Harrington's organizational strategy is determined, to a large extent, by its company vision, and fits the Task (Project)-oriented model which, based on team groups, is both egalitarian and flexible in its approach (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). Employees do what is necessary to achieve results, rather than fill defined roles and, although the GM HR spoke of the people-orientation skills of senior managers, operational orientation in the organization seems to be much more task-oriented than people-oriented.

Harrington has a divisional structure with each operations division, headed by a Group Director or Director, having autonomy and *consequently our divisions are quite different. The business units within the divisions can be quite different and, in fact, the size within business units tends to*

be quite different (GM HR). Such an organizational structure has the advantages of *market concentration, innovation and responsiveness to new opportunities in a particular environment* (Deresky, 2000, p.291), but has a disadvantage in the difficulty that may arise in coordinating across divisions. In Harrington's situation this disadvantage is compounded by the number of acquired organizations, all with their own cultures and approaches to doing business. Company philosophy with regard to absorption of acquired companies appears to be informal, and there is no specific induction process but, as the GM HR explained:

I think that if you take the acquisitions, they have been all very different personalities so that when the company has been acquired, and if the intention we have is some sort of cultural transition that brings some sort of overall (common) personality, I don't know if there is, I think there is one, but we don't tend to have that inculcated across every person, it evolves by the way the group is managed. There is a prevailing, in my view again, a modus operandi, and a prevailing value system that will get translated ultimately. When we bring a business on through our acquisitions quite often the model is, and it varies with every acquisition, but the people get on board and they are often told you know what you are doing, keep doing it, you are good at what you do and you know what you do, so just get on with the business, welcome to Harrington.

To some extent, the way the acquired organizational cultures have survived after being taken over has been due to the constant growth of the organization, and the way previously acquired employees tend to rapidly develop a sense of Harrington identity, whilst retaining elements of their previous culture, but this has not been so evident in later acquisitions. Harrington can be described as still in an Expansion/Formalization Phase (Gersick et al., 1997) and a move to a maturity phase of growth will force a decision on whether emphasis is to be placed on managing cultural diversity, or on recognising the value of having different cultures in an organisation. One way of gaining benefits from various cultures in an organization is to move managers between various divisions, or between business units within divisions. Harrington does not have the human resource management structure to do this:

I think there has been a tendency to do that [for people to stay in one business unit] but that hasn't been by design, that has just been because when you do 36 acquisitions and you are an operationally focused company that doesn't have the infrastructure to manage that cross-

divisional movement, the lack of cross-divisional movement is really just the consequence of not having a conscious strategy. There is no opposition for that cross-division movement, in fact I certainly support it, but it requires some management for it happen, and because everybody is on the go it may be doesn't happen as often that people would like but it is increasingly happening now (GM HR).

The priority of Generic Capabilities, as ranked by GM HR, is shown in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Generic Capabilities Ranking by GM HR of Harrington

Generic Capability	GM HR
Communication	3
Team Work	5
Problem Solving	2
Initiative and Enterprise	4
Planning and Organising	8
Self Management	7
Learning Skills	6
Technology	1

Table 3.11 rankings are strongly influenced by important elements of Harrington's organisational culture. In order of priority, these elements are: a focus on operational capability and employee productivity; a flexible approach to the existence of diverse business cultures imported as a result of a long series of acquisitions; and a strong senior management team operating with a great deal of autonomy, but sharing a common strategic vision with founding Directors.

Two issues emerge from this analysis. First, and relevant to the main research theme, is the environment in which a graduate can expect to work, and second is the potential for disintegration of the organization when the present founders leave. Schneider and Barsoux

(2003, p.81) commented that *management practices, in effect, represent the tip of the iceberg. In order to understand the meaning of these practices we need to undercover their cultural roots.* In this case study, the argument about whether organizational structure creates culture, or culture creates organization, becomes very important. In Harrington, however, a third variant exists which indicates that another way of developing a single organizational structure is an ability to create a *new* culture from a number of pre-existing cultures of component units. The success of such a new culture in ultimately supplanting its predecessors is critical to the long term-viability of Harrington.

Organizational environment The environment in which graduates will work in Harrington is governed by two criteria. One is a task-oriented organizational structure which Laurent (1983) described as a structure focused on what achievements have to be met, and whether objectives have, in fact, been met. This criterion is evident in much of the GM HR's responses. Social orientation, the other determinant of organizational structure, is concerned with relationships and social position (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). Although this is not evident in the wider aspect of Harrington operations, it is arguable that such an approach could be carried over into the organization as a result of the acquisition of a company where social orientation was more important. In such a situation, a graduate joining Harrington might be uncertain which is the appropriate culture to adopt, task or relationship. To summarize, a graduate joining Harrington is, in effect, joining one of many acquired companies that comprise the organization, and the culture of each of those individual groups might differ, in small or large ways, from every other group, and a conflict of cultures could occur. This is compounded by the relative difficulty, discussed earlier, of moving between business units.

Succession planning A potential for disintegration when the two founding Directors leave has been foreseen, and an emphasis on a company strategic vision, and training programs designed to reinforce that emphasis, is an important part of management development. Because Human Resource Management is not a major function in this organisation, especially in the operationally-oriented divisions, a formal management transfer program between divisions has not been developed. As a result, employees remain in their business units, often the same units they were in when their original company was acquired, for most of their working life.

Consequently full knowledge-management potential, defined as cross-transfer of knowledge (Holden, 2002), is not being realized and this organization runs the risk of developing a number of divisional silos which, although coming together at divisional head level, do not encourage junior managers to think outside their specific business units. Not only does such insularity deprive the organization as a whole of the specialized knowledge held by managers at all levels, but it may provide a basis for potential succession battles when top leadership changes. Whilst this topic is outside the scope of this research, it is an issue that a graduate joining this organisation would need to consider.

Conclusion

Graduates joining Harrington will be confronted with an emphasis on individual productivity in the context of a strongly task-oriented philosophy. As Schneider and Barsoux (2003) pointed out, this concept implies that hierarchy *exists only to assign responsibility* (p.98), and authority is defined by function. In such an environment, employees may find the settling-in period difficult in an atmosphere of uncertainty and minimal management guidance. For these reasons, graduates seeking employment in Harrington need a strong technology base, an ability to be able to work innovatively and independently, good communication skills, and be prepared to accept responsibility.

Case Study 8: Greythorpe Consultants

Greythorpe is a small, private consultancy with 17 employees, including 12 consultants, which undertakes work ranging from public policy issues for government bodies, to transport and logistics matters for commercial clients. Based in Australia, this company has undertaken consultancies in ASEAN, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the South Pacific. Key themes in this case are communication, teamwork, responsibility, relationships, openness, creative process, and project-by-project approach.

Company Culture

Although Greythorpe is a family company, culture in this organisation fits more closely Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners' (2002) profile of a fulfilment-oriented, *incubator* model. Relationships between management and staff are *diffuse*, and as a Junior Consultant (JC) commented:

I think it is very much a 'quasi family' business...I enjoy that experience of this [social, as well as business, interaction with other families in the company], but it actually does make you feel like you are part of the family and it does bring loyalty.

Both the Managing Director (MD) and JC raised an issue that they saw as a danger in too close a business family relationship. MD commented that:

That [MD as a father figure to employees] is a little bit like that, it is a kind of a two-way street because that is a kind of paternalism, and [if that] style becomes to be adopted I think the company probably needs to be careful about that because, although it can be warm and comfortable, it can also be not necessarily the best environment for people to grow their own independent skills and can leave them unadventurous, if you like.

JC's response to a question about her experience in working in this type of family culture makes a similar point:

I think [what] is a problem with this sort of family environment, perhaps it is in the last six months I began to consider [it], perhaps it makes a bit easy for someone at my level, that it does not push me as hard as I could be pushed.

Nevertheless, employees are strongly influenced by the cultural and ethical standards set by senior directors. JC's view was that:

He [MD] is a great role model and I think he is looked to by every single person in the organization... you can see that every person in organization wants to work to his standard and I don't actually think that is possible ...it is quite frustrating sometimes ...all the people are trying to do as good as [MD], or do as effective job as [MD], but just can't, they are never going to be that sort of person.

The Human Resource Manager (MGR HR), a more senior manager, added:

My feeling is within our company we all crave a little bit more of the share of learning from those people within our organization who are the gurus [the senior directors], you know, that have so much of experience that we want to have a part of that learning.

In discussing how culture in Greythorpe was developed, MD set out three aspects of what he hoped to achieve. First, is being *up front about that* [company ethics] *and what the values in the organisation are*, second is to make sure that senior management behaves in a way that is consistent with those values *not just fine words*, and third, and relevant to the points above:

Is to enfranchise everybody to hold us accountable for adherence to those values, and question the leadership in the company if they behave in a way which is deemed to be inconsistent for those values, and so comment I mean, and vice versa of course, the leadership is entitled to hold junior staff accountable for adherence to those values.

Organisational culture, in the sense of *the collective mental programming of otherwise similar persons from different organisations* (Hofstede, 2001, p.71), in Greythorpe has been described as *friendly, open, and inclusive* (JC). However the MD had a different working definition of culture:

Culture is the kind of rules and values that bond a society together in a small society...the essence of what we try to use as a kind of cultural guidelines, I think in my mind can be summed up primarily in two words that is respect and integrity and about in that order.

In relation to a further question about whether he thought this cultural philosophy helped in the marketplace he replied that, if they did, *that's terrific, but whether they do or not, they matter and we have to live by those.*

These cultural guidelines explain the difficulty JC had in deciding whether she thought Greythorpe management style could be classified as top-down or bottom-up:

I do not know if I could define it as either, I think it has elements of both. It has a top-down approach because it has been formed in part by the people who formed the organisation, and

their values and beliefs have dripped through the whole organisation, but as I said, I think that the individuals within each office really have shaped the company a lot, or the office culture in each of the States, so top-down and bottom-up.

MD was asked whether his position on cultural guidelines, and the family company environment in Greythorpe, meant that senior management expected a different pattern of behaviour from staff than would be the case in a large public company. Although he had not thought about the issue *in those terms*, he agreed that *I suspect that the answer is yes*. However he felt that it was difficult to equate the two concepts, family ownership and organizational size, *this is one of ownership history rather than scale*, and that a lot of people working in Greythorpe probably expected more autonomy and flexibility than they would get in larger companies. However, because his company was relatively small:

It is not hard to shape the organisation and modulate the shape and scope of the organisation to meet the characteristics of those who work in it. That is a lot harder to do if you work in [larger organisations].

Opportunities for junior staff to move up the organisation have an impact on the ability of Greythorpe to retain graduates. As MGR HR commented

I think it would be a great loss to the company to lose junior consultants within that two year period people talk about. I think that a four year period would enable the [internal company] learning to flow back in...and at that stage they become a financial earner to the company...that is the point at which a consultant will say now is a good time for me to leave or do I renegotiate my time in the company?

Preferences for working individually, or in teams, raised other issues. JC commented that despite there being a team work policy, some people in Greythorpe wanted to *achieve the whole task themselves* and this caused problems in the company, especially for junior consultants because *they [the individualists] are probably the people [whose knowledge] we need to duplicate and get a share of learning*. MGR HR explained that this situation arose because:

I think in the profile of the consultant that a consultant is a very high achieving and competitive person ...and the challenge becomes to manage those and draw their ability together in a team.

On more general matters, JC and MGR HR agreed that Greythorpe conformed to the transport industry image of 'most managers being male, middle-aged, and selected because of their experience'. MGR HR felt that opportunities for younger managers were probably greater in smaller consulting companies because:

The nature of consulting work may bring our consultants into contact...with number of different organizations and people within those organizations, and the smaller organization that we work in really requires everybody to be on board quite often so the challenges are there, the opportunities for them to work on the senior level than perhaps in a larger organization where you have to perhaps defer to a more senior consultant in charge so perhaps the opportunities for them [are there] whether you are a female or a male.

On the question of whether employees responded more favorably to general rather than prescriptive guidance from management, JC commented:

I think it is the certain amount of personal freedom in interpreting instructions. When an outcome needs to be achieved we are allowed to scope out how to get there. I think that it wouldn't be an open platter, it would have to be discussed, and agreement about the way forwards but it is not totally top down.

Table 3.12 Combined Generic Capabilities Ranking by MGR HR and JC of Greythorpe

1	Problem Solving
2	Communication Skills
3	Teamwork Skills
4	Initiative and Enterprise
5	Planning and Organising
6	Self Management
7	Learning Skills
Unranked: Technology Skills	

A combined ranking of generic capabilities by MGR HR and JC is shown in Table 3.12. However, in discussing generic capabilities, MD was more concerned to explain Greythorpe's philosophy in selecting graduates, than to give a basic ranking from highest to lowest. As he commented:

If they haven't got a whole lot of communication skills when they get here I don't think we have the wherewithal to help them acquire those because this is the basic. That they need to work with others as teamwork, where here people are used to taking responsibilities and thinking differently, I think we know techniques to push them to the stage so they have to start doing that.

One further skill that MD felt strongly about was learning skill. As he said:

The other [critical] thing...I think is to create both skills that facilitate other learning, but perhaps the fundamental [thing], that is a hunger for those things...because if you get somebody who has got that you are really half way.

Conclusion

Graduates joining Greythorpe should be prepared to be a productive part of a small business family, and to conform to a set of ethical values that senior management considers binding on everyone in the organisation, from managing director to junior consultant. Both size, and organisational operating style, make it unavoidable that business and personal interests will merge to a greater or lesser degree, and, accordingly, Greythorpe's culture is diffuse, with heavy emphasis on individual relationships.

Although room for advancement within the organisation is constrained by size, the nature of this company's work requires consultants, particularly at junior levels, to work with clients at a more senior level than would be the case in larger organisations. Consequently, *staff are there to confirm, criticize, develop, find resources for and help to complete the innovative product or service* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p.175).

To meet this cultural and skills profile, graduates will need a strong sense of independence, excellent communication skills, and flexibility to work at relatively high levels in teams, or individually, as particular situations demand. It is unlikely to be a role most graduates could fill as a first appointment.

Comparisons between Case Study 7 and Case Study 8

Harrington and Greythorpe are completely different in structure, role, and particularly size. Despite these differences, both organisations share a similar cultural style which takes as its model the standards set by the most senior members of the company. In both cases these senior members are the founders of their organisation.

Generic capability ranking in both companies is almost identical with the top four capabilities, excluding technology skills, being communications, problem solving, teamwork, and initiative and enterprise.

The major difference between the companies is in their person- and task-orientation positions. Harrington is project-oriented, and conforms to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners' (2002) *guided missile* culture where;

The ultimate criteria of human value...are how you perform, and to what extent you contribute to the jointly desired outcome. In effect, each member shares in problem-solving (p.173).

Such a culture is not affective (diffuse) but, neutral and therefore business-oriented (specific). GM HR's comment that *it is not about whether your personality conforms...it is about the result you produce* is a logical description of such a culture

Greythorpe is an example of a fulfillment-oriented culture. Employees' roles in such a culture are *to confirm, criticize, develop, find resources for and help to complete the innovative service or product* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p.175). Such a culture is both diffuse, and

marked by emotional commitment, with strong emphasis on the sense of loyalty that JC mentioned.

In both these organisations there is a senior management expectation that employees will remain with the company, and start bringing in new business. The nature of Greythorpe's consulting role, and of Harrington's broadly-based and growing organisation, provides employees with more opportunity for either job-fulfilment or, in Harrington's case, internal movement in the organisation, contributing in either case to a stable work force.

Finally, both companies recognize that they may face problems in the future if the present cohesive structure starts to fracture. Greythorpe's MD is concerned that, as his company expands and becomes more geographically dispersed, he will lose direct control because *strangers must be hired, and the founders' special relationships are lost* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p.176). Harrington has a different problem, one of looking to a time when both founding directors leave. As organisational culture is strongly influenced by these two senior managers, the Harrington Board has made *a conscious decision of building at that operational director level which again shares the common vision* (GM HR) in order to ensure an orderly transition to new senior management. However, in each organisation, management changes at founding director level might impact significantly on present cultural paradigms, leading to a situation analogous to a *Country Manager* model where various parts of the same organisation have different cultures.

Graduates joining either of these organisations would be expected to display the same top four generic capabilities. In all cases, technology skills are essential. However the prevailing culture in these organisations varies significantly, Greythorpe being a small, organisation where diffuse interpersonal relationships, as well as results, are very important. Harrington, a large organisation, is prepared to accept a certain amount of diversity in its staff providing employees produce results. Consequently, graduates wishing to keep business and personal aspects of their lives apart would be better suited to the specific environment of Harrington, rather than the diffuse relationships that appear to be the norm in Greythorpe.

Findings

The conceptually-clustered matrix developed from an analysis of the each of the eight case studies is shown at Appendix 3.2. As Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 127) noted *a conceptually clustered matrix has its rows and columns arranged to bring together items that "belong together"*.

For the purposes of the present investigation, a conceptually clustered matrix was developed from a priori theoretical views that there was a relationship between an independent variable i.e., organisational structure, and two dependent variables i.e., organisational culture and relative importance of generic capabilities. Although empirical data emerged as respondents answered a number of questions in the same way, this did not necessitate an alteration to the matrix structure. Analysis of logistics managers rankings is shown in Table 3.13 showing that problem solving, communication, teamwork, and initiative and enterprise skills rank as the top four generic capabilities in this comparison.

Table 3.13 Analysis of Paired-Case Generic Rankings by Logistic Managers

Case	Manager	Ranking	Merged Ranking
1	VP Log	4 2 7 3	3 7 2 (Outliers: 4 1)
2	Dir Log	3 7 2 1	
3	GM	3 1 2 8	3 1 2 (Outliers: 4 8)
4	Dir	3 1 2 4	
5	Dir	1 2 3 8	1 2 3 8
Overall Merged Ranking:			3 2 1 4

Note. 1. Communication skills; 2. Team work skills; 3. Problem solving skills; 4. Initiative and enterprise skills; 5. Planning and organising skills; 6. Self management skills; 7. Learning skills; 8. Technology skills.

An alternative set of rankings was provided by human resource (HR) managers in Cases 1, 7, and 8 (see Table 3.14). The top four ranked employment skills were the same as those of logistic managers, although in different priority order.

Table 3.14 Analysis of Generic Rankings by HR Managers

Case	Manager	Ranking	Merged Ranking
1	Dir HR	4 5 3 2	
7	GM HR	8 3 1 4	
8	MGR HR	3 1 2 4	3 1 4 2

Note. 1. Communication skills; 2. Team work skills; 3.Problem solving skills; 4.Initiative and enterprise skills; 5.Planning and organising skills; 6.Self management skills; 7.Learning skills; 8.Technology skills.

As a final triangulation, the rankings by two MDs, and a Dir Fin, are shown in Table 3.15 indicating high rankings for communication, problem solving, and initiative skills. However, managers at this level also ranked learning skills as the 4th most important capability.

Table 3.15 Analysis of Generic Rankings by MDs and Dir Fin

Case	Manager	Ranking	Merged Ranking
3	MD	1 4 3 5	
6	Dir Fin	8 3 5 7	
8	MD	1 7 2 4	1 3 4 7

Note. 1. Communication skills; 2. Team work skills; 3.Problem solving skills; 4.Initiative and enterprise skills; 5.Planning and organising skills; 6.Self management skills; 7.Learning skills; 8.Technology skills.

Summary

Analysis of generic capability data set out as a conceptually clustered matrix shows that, in three separate analyses of responses from a range of senior managers, communication, problem solving, and initiative and enterprise skills are regarded as most important. This ranking was not influenced by organisational structure, ownership arrangements or management culture. Senior managers in logistics and human resource areas also agreed that teamwork skills were part of the top four ranked generic capabilities, but managers at MD level felt that learning skills were equally as important. Other more general cultural issues arose from content analysis of the case studies, and have been summarized at the end of each case pair. Selective analysis of these summaries highlights the significance of the following points.

Role of Country Offices The three MNCs, discussed in Cases 1, 2, and 6, worked through strong, regional organisations, and management culture was controlled a GM responsible for each region. To this extent, therefore, it is difficult to categorize any of these MNCs as having a cohesive, single management culture. However, both large Australian companies operating in the international area do not appear to have such strong regional structures and, particularly in Case 5, organisational operating procedures and culture are similar in Australia and overseas.

Women in Management At senior management levels, the transport and logistic industry remains a male dominated industry. This is partly due to a reluctance to accept women managers in line positions because of possible industrial problems arising in manager/driver/warehouse operator confrontations. Although the situation is changing slowly, this cultural issue was evident in a number of the case studies (see Cases 3, 4, and 5).

Expectation of Family Business Managers Senior managers, especially Managing Directors and Directors, of family-owned companies expect their employees to conform to the standard of behaviour that is acceptable in that family, a point made by respondents in all four family-owned companies (Cases 3, 4, 5, 8) interviewed in Australia. This appears to present a problem for some young graduates who feel uncomfortable in what is a comparatively close, diffuse, relationship environment.

Finally, Study 1 indicates that development of generic capabilities is not the only issue to be addressed in preparing students for employment after graduation. Cultural issues of the type discussed above have significance within national boundaries, as well as in cross-cultural and international contexts, and should be covered as part of a logistics program. This point will be taken up again in the concluding chapter of this thesis. The next chapter covers graduates' perceptions of the RMIT logistics undergraduate program, as set out in responses to an online questionnaire.

Chapter 4

Study 2

Study 2 evaluates RMIT logistics graduates' attitudes towards work, their work environment, and the RMIT logistics program, in the context of the third research objective which is to assess adequacy of generic capabilities coverage in the RMIT logistics undergraduate program. This requirement raises two main questions: which generic capabilities do RMIT logistics graduates consider to be most important; and, from a graduate's perspective, how adequately are generic capabilities covered in the RMIT logistics undergraduate program? Chapter 4 describes the RMIT undergraduate logistics program, the research paradigm and methodology, selection of participants, the present research instrument, data analysis procedures, and discusses findings emanating from this investigation. Implications arising from the research are elaborated.

Logistics Undergraduate Programs at RMIT

RMIT logistics programs began in 1985 when a course in transport economics was developed in the then Department of Applied Economics. During the period 1985 to 1992 the course changed focus from primarily economic to a more general transport management approach. In 1993 the responsibility for the degree was transferred to a new Department of Marketing, Logistics, and Property, and by 1996 the title of the degree changed to Bachelor of Business in Transport and Logistics Management [B.Bus (Transport and Logistics Management)] to reflect the growing emphasis on logistics in the business world. As a four-year, 24 course program, this business degree is designed to meet logistics discipline requirements, and consists of a logistics major stream comprising eight courses, and general business courses, including economics, statistics, accounting, law, marketing, administration and computer applications. The third year of this program involves a compulsory work placement year.

This program is offered in Australia on a full- or part-time basis, and by distance education. An off-shore distance education program has been conducted in Singapore and Hong Kong since 1987, and in Shanghai, in conjunction with the Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade (SIFT), since

2000. Although program contents are the same, arrangements for delivering the SIFT program differ substantially from the distance education arrangements applying in Hong Kong and Singapore because, in Shanghai, the RMIT program is embedded in an existing SIFT degree, and there is a co-operative agreement between both universities. Another difference is the relative maturity of the Hong Kong and Singapore programs compared with the RMIT/SIFT agreement.

For these reasons, this research relates only to programs in Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore. Enrolment trends for these three areas in 1999, the year before the SIFT arrangements were implemented, were: Commonwealth Operating Grant (COG) funded students $n=191$; International On-shore students $n=76$; Australian Full-fee Paying students $n=2$; and International Off-shore students $n=206$ (RMIT Statistics and Reporting Unit, 2004).

Research Paradigm

Data collection to provide a basis for answering the two research questions with which Study 2 is concerned involves a process of survey research in which *a survey researcher asks people questions in a written questionnaire...then records answers. He or she typically summarizes answers to questions in percentages, tables, or graphs* (Neuman, 2003, p.35). Zikmund (1997) noted that *although it has been suggested that surveys are conducted to quantify certain factual information, certain aspects of surveys may also be qualitative* (p.203). In Study 2, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to analyze survey data because, apart from demographic data, the GCQ contains both scaled and open-ended questions. The overall research paradigm is, however, positivistic rather than interpretive because epistemology is objectivist, principal methodology is manipulative, and verification of hypotheses chiefly by quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Dane (1990) categorized information obtained from surveys as *being fact, opinion, or action*, defined as:

- *Fact is a phenomena or characteristic, often called sociological or demographic characteristics, available to anyone who knows how to observe it, e.g., age, race or gender.*

- *Opinion is an expression of a respondent's preference, feeling, or behavioral intention which can be objectively measured, but cannot be verified independently.*
- *Behavior refers to action completed by a respondent (pp.121-122).*

In this research, data obtained from the GCQ are primarily opinion, with some fact and behavioral input. Procedures for assessing internal and external validity of data are explained separately.

Methodology

Participants

Initially, participants were to be graduates of the B.Bus (Transport and Logistic Management) program during 1996-2000. This time frame was chosen because graduates prior to 1996 might not have been conversant with recent changes in the focus of the degree program, and post-2000 graduates might have had limited work experience. Figure 4.1 shows participant numbers by year of completion, and by ethnic background

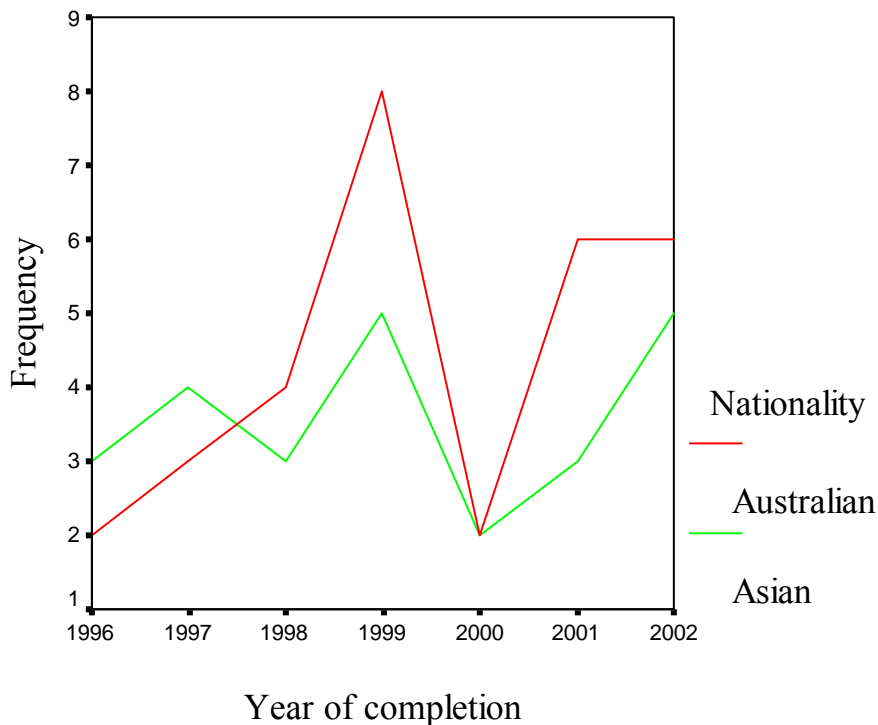


Figure 4.1 Participant Numbers by Year of Completion and Ethnic Background

For the purpose of this thesis, 'Asian' is used as a generic term for the present cohorts of Singaporean and Hong Kong students. Graduates from 2001 ($n=9$, time-in-job: range=1-9 years, $\bar{X}=2.9$ years) and 2002 ($n=12$, time-in-job: range=1-20 years, $\bar{X}=4.4$ years) have been included in the survey, although these years are outside the initially-proposed time frames, as an examination of relevant demographics reveals that graduates have had time to acquire work experience post graduation. As reported previously, graduates prior to 1996 ($n=3$), and post 2002 ($n=2$) have been excluded.

Participants were selected using RMIT alumni records to identify graduates ($n=1261$) within the nominated time frame. Unfortunately, only 9.5% ($n=120$) had contact details recorded, with Australian graduates accounting for 43% ($n=52$). Cross-checking with lists of graduate contacts provided by RMIT logistics program agents in Hong Kong ($n=50$) and Singapore ($n=23$) resulted in more international participants ($n=25$), and clarification of additional Australian graduate addresses as a result of input from other graduates ($n=11$), increased the potential sample size to 156. There were a number of inaccuracies in the Hong Kong email address list provided by the RMIT agent (36%), and the relatively smaller number of Singapore graduate email addresses is attributable to the agent only recently having started to collate such data.

Owing to the relatively small ns , Hong Kong and Singapore responses were grouped together ($n=28$). Three Australian responses were invalid (incomplete data), and this reduced the usable responses to Australian ($n=42$) and Asian ($n=28$). Sample sizes are Australians ($n=31$) and Asian ($n=25$). Response rates are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Survey Response Rates

	Australia	Hong Kong	Singapore
Mail out (n)	63	59	34
Not Deliverable (n)	8	19	6
Response (n)	45	15	13
Response Rate	81.8%	37.5%	46.4%

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics: Australian and Asian Graduates

	Aust (<i>n</i>=31)	Asian (<i>n</i>=25)
Age (Years)		
Mean	28.58 (5.99)	34.80 (6.87)
Media	26	35
Range	24-47	26-49
Gender		
Male	58.1%	80.0%
Year Complete Degree		
Range	1996-2002	1996-2002
Median	1999	1999
Further Study Undertaken		
Yes	32.3%	44.0%
Type of Study		
Undergraduate	6.5%	4.0%
Post Graduate	22.6%	32.0%
Other (e.g., Professional Association)	8.0%	3.2%
Nationality of Supervisor		
Australian	77.4%	9.7%
Singaporean	-	36.0%
Chinese	-	36.0%
Other (e.g., American)	22.6%	20.0%
Time in Job (years)		
Mean	1.98 (1.57)	4.48 (4.32)
Range	1-9	1-20
Overseas Work Experience		
Yes	35.5%	20.0%
Overseas Work Time (years)		
(Mean)	1.92 (2.05)	2.30(1.89)

Note. SD in parentheses.

Demographic Details

Demographic details of participants are shown in Table 4.2. There are a number of differences between cohorts. Mean age range for the Asian cohort ($\bar{X} = 34.8$) is significantly higher than that for the Australians ($\bar{X} = 28.9$) [$t(54) = -3.617, p = .001$]. Gender balance for Australians (male=58.1%) is much more evenly distributed between males and females than that for the Asians (male=80.0%).

RMIT statistical reports for 1997-2000 show a gender ratio for all enrolled students, including Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students ($N=201,323$), biased in favour of males (52.8%) (RMIT Statistics and Reporting Unit, 2004). A more reliable figure for Australian graduates of the B.Bus Transport and Logistic Management degree (1996-2000) ($n=166$) is gained from an analysis of RMIT Alumni lists which show a higher male component of 74.11%, a result almost replicated in the 2000 program (Male=76%) (RMIT Alumni, 2003). International gender ratios are different, and analysis of records of Singapore graduates 7/1996 to 7/1999 ($n=254$) shows a male component of 59.84%. A cross-tabulation revealed a nonsignificant relationship between country of origin and gender.

Median for both groups' year of completion is 1999. Since graduation, 44.0% of Asians have undertaken further study, compared with 32.3% of Australian graduates. Asian graduates stay significantly longer in their jobs ($\bar{X} = 4.48$ Years) compared with Australian graduates ($\bar{X} = 1.98$ years) [$t(54) = -3.00, p = .004$]. This finding can be attributed to differences in age profile (see Table 4.2), with older Asian participants having more work experience than younger Australian graduates. Although 35.5% of Australian graduates have overseas work experience compared with 20% of Asian graduates, the latter have spent more time working overseas ($\bar{X} = 2.30$ years) than the former ($\bar{X} = 1.92$ years), the difference, however, is nonsignificant [$t(12) = -.339, p = .741$].

Instrument: The Generic Capabilities Questionnaire

A five-part measure, the Generic Capabilities Questionnaire (GCQ), was developed for this thesis. This instrument covers participants' background details, attitude to work, work environment, opinions of RMIT logistic program generic capability content, and the extent to which the RMIT logistics program prepared, or did not prepare, students for employment in international or cross-cultural management appointments. Specifically designed for this research as a web-based survey, responses were submitted on-line. This questionnaire (see Appendix 4.1 for a copy of the GCQ) was pre-tested on 20 graduates, and four modifications were made to Part 1 to obtain more data on the participants' supervisors and overseas work experience, prior to the questionnaire being placed on the RMIT School of Marketing website in January 2004. The following section provides a description of each part of the GCQ.

Part One. This section of the instrument provides specific demographic data. Items are adapted from a Monash University measure on *Competencies in Managing a Multicultural Workforce* (Chang, 2001). Additional specific questions, for example those relating to work and supervisory arrangements, address aspects relevant to the present research objectives. Data obtained from this part of the survey are summarized in Table 4.2.

Part Two. This section explores participants' attitudes both to work in general and, specifically, to their reaction to working in multicultural environments. An important element relates to teamwork because, as Adler (2002) pointed out, the most productive multicultural teams learn to use their diversity when it enhances efficiency. Participants answer 35 questions on 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 7=*Strongly Agree*. Although not indicated as such in this instrument, questions are grouped into seven generic capability applications: Items 1-6 Communications; Items 7-13 Teamwork; Items 14-16 Problem Solving; Items 17-20 Initiative and Enterprise; Items 21-26 Planning and Organisational Skills; Items 27-30 Self Management; and Items 31-35 Learning Skills. Questions are adapted from existing cross cultural surveys as follows: Adler (2002) Items 1, 6, 7, 21, 25, 27, 32; Hofstede (1984) Items 2, 3, 8, 9, 14, 17, 18, 20, 26, 29, 34; Tompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) Items

4, 10, 11, 15, 22, 23, 24, 30, 35; Bigelow (1999) Items 12, 13, 22; and Biggs (1987) Items 16, 19, 28, 31, 33.

Part Three. This part contains eight questions relating to participants' work environment, specifically relationships between participants and their supervisors. Questions are adapted from the Monash University survey (Chang, 2001), and are designed to cover both general supervisory and cultural aspects of supervisor/subordinate relationship, for example, Question 4: *my supervisor can deal with unfamiliar situations*, and Question 6: *my supervisor tries to understand the differences between cultures*. Items are rated on 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 7=*Strongly Agree*.

Part Four. Seven generic capabilities, developed by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of Australia (ACCI/BCA), are assessed on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 7=*Strongly Agree*. Participants rate the extent to which the RMIT logistics program provided them with a grounding in those capabilities e.g., communication skills, and rank the capabilities in what they consider is their order of priority. Two additional questions ask participants to suggest what other generic capabilities should be included in the program, and which should be deleted.

Part Five. This section, involving one open-ended question, asks participants for their opinion on the success of the RMIT logistics program in preparing them for international or multicultural management appointments. Unlike Parts One to Four, analysis of this section required qualitative methods.

Procedure

As noted earlier, following the pre-testing of the GCQ, the revised questionnaire was placed on the School of Marketing website. Graduates of the logistics undergraduate program during the nominated period, and whose email addresses were known, were contacted by email and invited to participate in the survey. This contact email included, as an attachment, a copy of the Plain Language Statement (see Appendix 4.2) which was also an introductory page to the on-line questionnaire. Participants were asked to submit their responses on-line. Four weeks after a

specified submission date a reminder email was sent to non-respondents, and e-mails were also sent to RMIT agents in Singapore and Hong Kong seeking their assistance in increasing the response rate. Furthermore, a notice was also included in the quarterly Alumni Newsletter, with limited success ($n=5$). Participants who had not responded within four months were not followed up further.

Internal and External Validity

Internal validity, the extent to which an *independent variable is the cause of the effects you measure with the dependent variable* (Dane, 1990, p.88), may be jeopardized by six major types of extraneous variables: history, maturation effect, testing effect, instrumentation effect, selection, and mortality (Zikmund, 1997). External validity, on the other hand, is the degree to which experimental data can be generalized to other groups in the population being studied, or as Dane (1990) noted, is the relationship between the research experience and everyday experience (p.113) and *in essence, it is a sampling question* (Zikmund, 1997, p.306). Although a larger sample size would have been preferable, this was not possible because of graduate contact issues discussed earlier. However the research design takes into account the relevant extraneous variables particularly maturation, the way people change over time, and selection effect, *possible sample bias resulting from differential selection of respondents for the comparison groups* (Zikmund, 1997, p.306), and therefore ensures both internal and external validity.

Statistical Methods

Statistical methods proceeded through three main steps: data screening, descriptive statistics, and application of multivariate methods (e.g., MANOVA).

Data Screening and Descriptive Statistics. Initial data screening was done to check for outliers, violation of statistical assumptions, and incorrect or incomplete data entries. Analysis of demographic characteristics involved the application of descriptive statistics. Cronbach's alphas (α) were obtained on all scales in Parts 2, 3, and 4. Principal components were derived for

scales whose α s were ≥ 0.7 . These components were saved as factor scores (FS), and used in subsequent multivariate analyses.

MANOVA. For scales with Cronbach's alphas (α) < 0.7 , MANOVA tests of group differences (i.e. Australian versus Asian) involved dependent variables (DVs) as clusters of items comprising a scale as DVs, rather than FS. FS were not utilized owing to the low levels of internal reliability, and possibility of factors being unstable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Pallant, 2001). Accordingly, 1-way MANOVA testing for group differences (i.e., Australian versus Asians) were run on clusters of items of seven scales in Part 2: Scale 1 (Items 1 to 6); Scale 2 (Items 7 to 13); Scale 3 (Items 14 to 16); Scale 4 (Items 17 to 20); Scale 5 (Items 21 to 26); Scale 6 (Items 27 to 30); and Scale 7 (Items 31 to 35).

Results

This section details results emanating from multivariate tests of analysis (MANOVA), evaluations of internal reliability of scales, associated principal components analysis (PCA), along with related qualitative findings. Information concerning results of data screening processes is also reported.

Data Screening

Data entry was checked to identify incomplete and incorrect data, and outliers. Although 77 completed questionnaires were received, five returns were duplicated and subsequently removed. Data for five respondents were excluded because graduation dates were beyond the timeframe, and two were excluded owing to questionnaire incompleteness ($>50\%$ missing data). Cross-tabulation analyses (Dane, 1990) involving answers to the item *Have you undertaken any further study since you graduated from the B.Bus Transport and Logistics program?* showed that 29 participants (51.8%) responded ambiguously by answering *No*, and then specifying *undergraduate* as the type of further study. Close examination of responses revealed that respondents were referring to their initial degree because, as Table 4.2 indicates, only 6.5% of Australians, and 4% of Asians, who answered *Yes* to the further study question, selected

undergraduate study as the level. A similar situation was evident in response to the question *Do you think any of the listed generic capabilities should not be covered in the RMIT logistics program?* 11 Australian and nine Asian graduates responded *Yes*, but only five respondents listed characteristics to be removed: *cultural management, thinking outside the square, mathematical skills, learning/communication skills, and initiative/enterprise skills*. Of the skills suggested for removal, only learning, communication, initiative, and enterprise skills were listed in the questionnaire.

Demographic Results

In terms of age, boxplot analysis shows no outliers for the Asian; but four extreme scores, and two outliers, for the Australian cohort. Screening for normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) reveals that Kolmogorov-Smirnov values are significant for Australians ($p < .05$) but non-significant for Asians ($p > .05$), indicating a violation of the assumption of normality for the Australian cohort. Pallant (2001) comments that, in the social sciences, *this does not necessarily indicate a problem with the scale, but rather reflects the underlying nature of the construct being measured* (p.59). Extreme case scores and outliers in the Australian cohort did not have a strong influence on the Mean score as indicated by the 5% Trimmed Mean (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). For this reason, transformation of extreme and outlier scores was not undertaken and included in the analysis (Dane, 1990; Pallant, 2001;).

Summary of Data Screening

Single-field screening (Dane, 1990) of data reveals data entry errors for two participants. These respondents were excluded. Cross-tabulation analysis identified an error in understanding of one subsidiary question by 29 participants, and by 20 participants in another question, and these data were corrected after reference to the original responses (Zikmund, 1997; Pallant, 2001). Although skewness and kurtosis were significant in the Australian age group, transformation was not carried out as this would have altered relationships between Australian and Asian cohorts on this characteristic (Dane, 1990; Pallant, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Both cohorts are representative of graduates of the logistic programs in their areas, full-time students predominating in Australia (86.1%) and, to a lesser extent, in off-shore programs (56.7%). Cohorts differ nonsignificantly on whether they undertook further study, had overseas work

experience, and on overseas work time. The following section reports results concerning tests of hypotheses established a priori.

Participants' Attitude to Employment

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitudes towards work.

Part 2 of the Generic Capabilities Questionnaire (GCQ) comprises seven scales designed to assess participants' general attitude towards work. Each scale addressed one of seven generic capabilities (e.g., Communication Skills) forming the bases of this investigation.

To check underlying consistency, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for each scale (Grimm & Yarnold, 2002). As Pallant (2001) pointed out, with scales comprising less than 10 items it is not unusual to find alphas with values $\alpha < 0.7$. Tests of internal reliability reveal that all scales have less than 10 items, with $\alpha < 0.7$ (range $\alpha = 0.28$ to 0.65). In view of this relative lack of internal consistency, and the risk of factor instability, it was decided not to proceed with PCA of scale items, but to use multivariate between-group tests (MANOVA) utilizing clusters of items comprising each scale as dependent variables. That is, Items 1-6 comprising Communication Skills were entered simultaneously in a MANOVA analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Grimm & Yarnold, 2002). The independent variable is nationality (i.e., Australian versus Asian).

Preliminary assumption testing was conducted for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and no violations were noted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Huck, 2004). Table 4.3 shows MANOVA results, comparing Australian versus Asian graduates on their attitude to work.

Table 4.3 Omnibus Multivariate between Group Tests (Australian versus Asian graduates) on Attitudes towards Employment

Dependent Variable	Hypothesis df	Error df	Pilai Trace Value
Communications (Items 1-6)	6	49	0.34**
Teamwork (Items 7-13)	7	48	0.44***
Problem Solving (Items 14-16)	3	51	0.26**
Initiative/Enterprise (Items 17-20)	4	51	0.15
Planning/Organising (Items 21-26)	6	48	0.23*
Self Management (Items 27-30)	4	51	0.01
Learning Skills (Items 31-36)	5	50	0.16

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Analyses show that Australian and Asian graduates differ significantly on four of seven scales: communication, teamwork, problem solving, and planning and organizing skills.

Post hoc tests of between-subjects effects on dependent variables indicate that there are significant differences in responses to eight items across six scales. These scales, and the items involved, are:

- *Managers should be careful not to ask subordinates for their opinions too frequently otherwise the manager might appear to be weak and incompetent.* Item 6.
- *People ideally achieve in groups which assume joint responsibility.* Item 10.
- *Individuals should be careful about showing too much initiative because the results may be damaging to the team's welfare.* Item 12.
- *Achievement or success in solving problems is the only legitimate source of status in business.* Item 15.
- *It is important to me that my work is challenging and that I get a sense of personal accomplishment from what I do.* Item 18.

- *People should avoid making changes because things might get worse.* Item 22.
- *In business the short term bottom line result is the most important thing.* Item 23.
- *Reading books and newspapers is an important way of remaining current in my profession.* Item 34.

Table 4.4 shows the Mean Scores and SD of Australian and Asian graduates' responses on these items.

Table 4.4 Significant Between-Subjects Effects (Australian versus Asian); Mean Scores and SD

Item	Aust (n= 30)	Asian (n=25)	
Communication skills Q6	1.87 (0.92)	3.12 (1.30)	***
Teamwork Skills Q10	4.90 (1.33)	5.60 (0.96)	*
Teamwork skills Q12	2.03 (0.95)	4.32 (1.86)	***
Problem Solving Skills Q15	3.07 (1.41)	4.36 (1.22)	**
Initiative and Enterprise Skills Q18	6.71 (0.46)	6.20 (0.87)	**
Planning and Organising Skills Q22	1.53 (0.63)	2.28 (1.27)	**
Planning and Organising Skills Q23	2.30 (1.32)	3.08 (1.32)	*
Learning Skills Q34	5.42 (1.06)	6.04 (0.80)	*

Notes. SD in parentheses. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

These significant differences (Table 4.4) cover a range of cultural characteristics which are discussed later in this chapter. Accordingly, H1 is supported partially.

Graduates' Perception of Work Environment

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Australian and Asian graduates differ on their perceptions of their work environment.

A test of internal consistency on the eight items comprising the Work Environment scale (see Appendix 4.1) revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .74$. Given the relatively high level

of internal consistency, these items were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA). PCA tests of statistical assumption indicate a large number of correlation coefficients $r \geq .3$ in the correlation matrix, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure =.79, and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($df=28, p=.000$) (Pallant, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

A PCA shows two factors with eigenvalues >1 , the first component accounting for 51.04% of the variance, and the other 16.22%. As the screeplot showed a clear break after the first component, a decision was made to force all items onto one factor. This factor was used for further independent-samples *t*-testing (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1992; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Grimm & Yarnold, 2002). Table 4.5 shows the order, by size of loadings, in which variables contribute to this single factor. Results of an independent-samples *t*-test performed on the single factor [$t(51) = -.878, p=.384$] demonstrate that there are no significant differences in the responses of Australian and Asian graduates to this factor. Accordingly, H2 is not supported.

**Table 4.5 Order (by Size of Loadings) in which Variables Contribute to Factor 1:
Work Environment; Supervisor Attributes**

Variables	Factor Loading
Acceptance of working differences caused by culture	0.81
Flexibility and adaptability	0.78
Ability to handle unfamiliar situations when dealing with cultural differences	0.76
Ability to deal with unfamiliar situations	0.73
Willingness to try to understand differences between cultures	0.70
Willingness to find out why different cultures do things differently	0.67
Awareness of employee's cultural traditions and practices	0.63
Refusal to explain his or her actions	-0.60
% of variance explained	51.04%

Generic Capabilities Content of the RMIT Logistics Program

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Australian and Asian graduates have differing perceptions about how well the RMIT logistics program covers generic capabilities.

Participants expressed views on the extent to which the RMIT undergraduate logistics program included coverage of a list of generic capabilities. A description of each capability was included in the GCQ, and respondents rated the logistics program on how they believed it provided them with a grounding in generic capabilities other than specifically technical skills. Table 4.6 summarizes results of independent-samples *t*-tests on this item and shows that Australian and Asian graduates' ratings of the coverage of generic capabilities in the logistic program did not differ significantly on any capability. Accordingly, findings fail to support H3.

Table 4.6 Graduates' Rating of Logistics Program Coverage of Generic Capabilities

Capability	Group	Mean	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Communication	Aust	5.14 (1.25)	52	-1.71
	Asian	5.72 (1.24)		
Teamwork	Aust	5.59 (0.91)	52	-0.63
	Asian	5.72 (0.94)		
Problem Solving	Aust	5.03 (1.35)	52	-1.31
	Asian	5.44 (0.82)		
Initiative	Aust	4.55 (1.24)	52	-1.75
	Asian	5.12 (1.13)		
Planning	Aust	5.10 (1.11)	52	-1.52
	Asian	5.56 (1.08)		
Self Management	Aust	5.21 (1.37)	52	0.76
	Asian	4.92 (1.41)		
Learning Skills	Aust	5.52 (1.21)	52	1.08
	Asian	5.16 (1.21)		

Notes. SD in parentheses. All *ps* non-significant ($p > .05$).

Additional Generic Capabilities Required in the Program

Participants commented on additional generic capabilities that they thought should be included in the RMIT logistics program. Responses to this question are middling to low with 41.9% of Australian graduates versus 32% of Asian graduates suggesting additional generic capabilities. Table 4.7 summarizes these suggestions.

Table 4.7 Additional Generic Capabilities Required (by Cohort)

Capability (Skills)	Frequency	
	Aust	Asian
Leadership	4	1
Cultural	3	-
People Management	2	5
Technology	2	2
Negotiation	2	-

A theme that emerges from these recommendations is that, at least, a small proportion of Australian and Asian graduates feel that more attention should be given to leadership, people management and technological aspects. Although the need for cultural and negotiation skill capabilities is included in the Australian recommendations, these do not seem to be issues that Asian graduates feel strongly about.

Generic Capabilities Not Required in the Program

There were 20 affirmative responses to the question asking if any of the listed capabilities should be removed. However, only two recommended that existing capabilities should be excluded, one response listing *learning and communication skills*, and the other *initiative and enterprise skills*. No reasons were given for the recommendations.

Graduates' Ranking of Generic Capabilities

Hypothesis (H4): Australian and Asian graduates rank generic capabilities in different orders of priority.

Graduates ranked generic capabilities on what they believe is their order of importance, with the most important capability ranked as one. Results of independent-samples *t*-tests of these rankings are shown in Table 4.8. There are nonsignificant differences between Australian and Asian graduates' ranking of the listed generic capabilities. Accordingly, H4 is not supported.

Table 4.8 Graduates' Ranking of Generic Capabilities

Capability	Group	Mean	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Communication	Aust	2.19 (1.94)	46	0.19
	Asian	2.09 (1.66)		
Teamwork	Aust	3.24 (1.56)	43	-0.23
	Asian	3.35 (1.63)		
Problem Solving	Aust	3.72 (1.77)	43	-0.56
	Asian	4.05 (2.21)		
Initiative	Aust	3.72 (1.84)	43	-0.16
	Asian	3.80 (1.54)		
Planning	Aust	4.44 (1.87)	43	0.70
	Asian	4.05 (1.85)		
Self Management	Aust	5.08 (1.44)	43	0.28
	Asian	4.95 (1.64)		
Learning Skills	Aust	5.60 (1.61)	43	-0.33
	Asian	5.75 (1.41)		

Notes. SD in parentheses. All *ps* non-significant(>.05).

Graduates' General Comments on the RMIT Logistic Program

Graduates completing the GCQ were asked to indicate the extent to which the RMIT logistics program did, or did not, prepare them for international or cross-cultural management appointments. Thirty four (60.7%) respondents made substantial comments, both in positive and

negative terms, to this question. These comments were analyzed using the Leximancer 2.B05 software package, and a content analysis approach. *Content analysis is a research tool used for determining the presence of words or concepts in collections of textual documents* (Leximancer Manual, 2005, p.20), and is used for a number of purposes, including coding responses to open-ended questions.

A concept map was developed, and from this map, a list of the 10 top-ranked concepts, defined as *collections of words that generally travel together throughout the text* (Leximancer Manual, 2005, p.25), was developed. As a further step, statistical analysis was then carried out to determine the frequency (%) of co-occurrence of these concepts with the RMIT Logistics Program as an overall concept, as indicated by graduates' responses to this question. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.9 which shows a strong linkage between the concept *RMIT logistics program*, and *international* and *employment* concepts, but a relatively weak link with *cultural* aspects.

Table 4.9 Co-Occurrence of 10 Top Ranked Concepts with the RMIT Logistics Program

Concepts	Co-Occurrence (%)
International	100
Employment	100
Logistics	75
Management	75
Appointments	62.5
Students	37.5
Experience	37.5
Work	25
Cultural	12.5
Skills	12.5

After main themes in graduate responses, and their frequency of co-occurrence in the concept map, were identified the positive or negative content of those comments was measured. This analysis involved identifying relevant comments from the text summaries associated with each of

the main concepts, and categorizing comments in those summaries as having either a positive (good aspects of the program) or a negative (poor aspects) content. Table 4.10 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Table 4.10 Attributes Derived from Analysis of Text Summaries

Category	Absolute Number of Mentions	Positive	Negative
<i>General</i>			
Program Value	9	8	1
Practical Logistics	3	-	3
Work Experience	1	1	-
<i>Cultural Awareness</i>			
International Focus	9	1	8
Student Cultural Diversity	8	8	-
Problem Solving	5	1	4
Overseas Exchanges/ Visits	3	-	3
<i>Generic Capabilities</i>			
Teamwork/Networking	5	2	3
Initiative/Enterprise	3	-	3
Presentation Skills	3	-	3
Communication	2	2	-
Planning	1	1	-
Self Management	1	1	-
Information Technology	1	-	1

Comments in Table 4.10 can be grouped into three broad categories: *General* (program value, practical logistics, work experience), *Cultural Awareness* (international focus, student cultural diversity, overseas exchanges/visits), and *Generic Capabilities* (problem solving, teamwork and networking, initiative and enterprise, presentation skills, written communication, planning, self management, information technology).

Graduates' General Comments on the RMIT Logistics Program

Graduates' responses to an open-ended question requiring them to comment generally on the logistics program are discussed three broad headings identified earlier: General, Cultural Awareness, and Generic Capabilities.

General Of three categories under this heading, Program Value attracted the highest number of comments ($n = 9$), and eight of these were strongly supportive. Two examples of such comments are *the RMIT logistics program was a good starting point to learn about cross cultural management* (Case 58, Asian), and *I believe the program was excellent preparation for cross cultural appointments* (Case 9, Australian). One comment criticized the program for not providing a more clearly differentiated qualification *like an accounting degree, or an architectural one* (Case 57, Asian), but this criticism was not raised by any other graduate. Practical aspects of logistics coverage were criticized by three respondents, typical comments being *we should be able to look at the cost involved in undertaking any work whether in-house or outsourced* (Case 23, Australian), and *lack of exposure [to practical logistics applications] during the course (e.g., factory visit, air/sea terminal visit* (Case 64, Asian).

Cultural Awareness Comments in this category focused on two main issues: international focus of the logistics program, and importance of student cultural diversity.

In these two areas opinions appear to be almost diametrically opposed. Eight respondents criticized what they perceived as a lack of international focus in the program, typical comments being *the Australian course didn't prepare us too much for working outside Australia* (Case 26, Australian); and *I do not think that the RMIT Logistics Program prepare[d] us for employment in international or cross-cultural management appointments* (Case 28, Asian). Only one respondent made a positive comment in this regard (Case 9, Australian). A common theme in criticism is summarized in the comment that *the study of international workplaces was not a topic I remember covering formally neither was a subject providing skills on dealing with people at a range of skill base* (Case 31, Australian). Nevertheless, eight respondents emphasized how

important they found the diversity of cultures amongst their fellow students, as indicated by responses such as *the RMIT Logistics Program gave me the opportunity to learn and work with Australians, other Asians, and International individuals, which definitely gave me the significant edge when working in my American company* (Case 38, Asian); and *as a student you were aware of other students (both local and international) and their study habit[s] and experience* (Case 71, Australian). Finally, in this category, there were three responses which suggested that more emphasis should be given to overseas exchanges, an example being:

My only recommendation would be to encourage more students to go on exchange to key locations such as Metropolitan College [Malaysia]. This would be of huge benefit to the Local and International student bodies (Case 3, Australian).

Generic Capabilities Criticism of generic capability development in logistics graduates was most evident in responses relating to problem solving, presentation of options (oral presentation), and initiative and enterprise. An example of a response covering all three capabilities follows:

The written word (report formats and presentations) were practiced however on the way to and through management positions the ability to present well and exude confidence and presence is equally important as knowing your topic well. A lack of initiative and the inability to step back from repeated occurrences of the same problem to understand its cause and to then fix that cause is the single biggest criticism I have of our organisation's junior staff and indeed the management team. Undergraduates could do with practice in seeing common threads amongst seemingly unrelated problems; in identifying the problem; exercising analysis tools or acumen in designing a solution and most importantly in showing initiative in solution implementation (Case 2, Australian).

A similar comment was made by an Asian graduate:

Regardless whether one is in the logistic industry or any other industry; it is important to have good communications skills and networking skills. These are the skills that will help to propel one's career (Case 44, Asian).

Comments on other generic capabilities were relatively minor although three respondents criticized the way that teams were structured in the program, one comment being that *understanding cross-cultural differences could also have been fostered by grouping/mixing international with local students for group assignments or class activities* (Case 30, Australian).

Results of the quantitative survey do not support three of the four hypotheses established a priori. However, Hypothesis 1 *Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitude towards work* is supported partially. Australian and Asian graduates' attitudes towards their work environment, and to the adequacy of the RMIT logistics program, are favorable. There is limited support from both cohorts for more emphasis on leadership and people management skills, and responses to a final open-ended question indicate that participants note that there is considerable value in the cultural diversity of the student body, but more emphasis should be placed on international aspects of the program, and on development of problem-solving, oral communication, and initiative and enterprise capabilities. Both Australian and Asian graduates rank generic capabilities in the same order of priority, with the most important capabilities being communication, teamwork, problem-solving and initiative. The next section discusses these findings in detail.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses quantitative and qualitative results of Study 2 in terms of the four research hypotheses, and outlines implications of these findings for logistic undergraduate degree programs. Limitations associated with the present methodology are also reported.

Findings Relating to Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitudes towards work.

Multivariate analysis (MANOVA) of seven scales in Part 2 of the GCQ showed that Australian and Asian graduates differ significantly in their responses to eight of 35 questions across four scales. For this reason, H1 is supported partially. Significant differences, and cultural aspects related to these items, are discussed below.

Managers should be careful not to ask subordinates for their opinions too frequently otherwise the manager might appear to be weak and incompetent (Item 6). This item was designed to probe whether respondents considered their managers to be experts or problem solvers. Adler

(2002) pointed out that there is no *single right answer* (p.52) to this question, solutions depend on which particular cultural attitude influences the organisation concerned. In this case, there is a significant difference between Australian versus Asian responses, with Australian graduates disagreeing very strongly with the proposition, indicating a preference for situations where managers need not be an expert in areas they manage. Asian graduates adopt a more neutral position, inclining towards a view that managers should be able to answer subordinates' questions in order to maintain their credibility (Hofstede, 2001; Adler, 2002; Ferraro, 2006). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) argued that in a culture where status is achieved by ascription, respect earned by family background rather than achievement, managers are more likely to *be much more emphatic about knowing "all the answers" than managers from many other cultures* (p.107). This finding is consistent with those studies and is also consistent with Littrell's (2001) comment that *in the Singaporean company...paternalistic practices are how productivity is achieved*. Consequently, Australian graduates must expect that, in paternalistic cultures such as Singapore's, managers rarely seek support from subordinates, and admitting a need for support is seen as a weakness.

People ideally achieve in groups which assume joint responsibility (Item 10) and *individuals should be careful about showing too much initiative because the results may be damaging to the team's welfare* (Item12). It is in this teamwork area that Australian and Asian graduates differ most significantly. Both statements dealt with differences between individualism and collectivism (Adler, 2002). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) reported results of surveys of international business management over 15 years indicating that 64% of Australian managers were in businesses where individual credit is received, compared with 56% of Singapore managers. Responses to these two items indicate that, although both cohorts *agree* or *strongly agree* that collective responsibility is an important group attribute, Australian graduates exhibit substantially higher Individualism Index (IDV) characteristics than their Asian counterparts. This result conforms to Hofstede's (1980) findings, and to more recent work (Littrell, 2001; Adler, 2002; Powell, 2002; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Tayeb, 2003; Deresky, 2006), demonstrating that Asian businesses place a higher value on collective work practices than do their Australian counterparts.

In an academic program such as the RMIT undergraduate logistics degree, which relies heavily on group assignments, these different cultural characteristics have potential to cause intra-group friction. Of more concern is the observation that, in an absence of adequate grounding in cultural differences, Australian and Asian graduates might encounter similar situations in their early management careers, and not be equipped to handle them. Managers working in different cultures might find it extremely difficult to reconcile emphasis on group membership, and the importance of belonging (collectivism), with an emphasis on individual initiative, and the importance of leadership (individualism), unless collectivism can be separated from resistance to change (Litrell, 2001).

Achievement or success in solving problems is the only legitimate source of status in business (Item 15). This statement was designed to determine whether respondents subscribe to an achievement, or to an ascription, culture in how people are accorded status. Tayeb (2003) listed Australia, America, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland as achievement cultures, and Indonesia and China as ascription cultures. Marx (1999) linked ascription cultures with formal and title-oriented approaches, and achievement cultures with informal and democratic approaches, to business. There is significant variation between Australian versus Asian responses to this item, reflecting different cultural characteristics of the two cohorts, and this finding conforms to different concepts of business status in Australia and Asia (Deresky, 2006). Managers working in an ascription-oriented culture must accept that achievement is not as important as family, schooling, or age. This adjustment could be difficult for Australian graduates educated in an achievement-oriented society.

It is important to me that my work is challenging and that I get a sense of personal accomplishment from what I do (Item 18). Both cohorts agreed that this statement, dealing as it did with questions of initiative and enterprise, was important although Australian graduates were more positive than their Asian colleagues. This result conforms to differing attitudes of managers from collective (Asian) and individualistic (Australian) cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Waley-Cohen, 1999; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2002; Adler, 2003; Ferraro, 2006). Notwithstanding, the relatively high Asian scores indicate that modern Asian graduates are more likely to display initiative and enterprise than Asian managers Redding (1993) surveyed, and of whom he

commented *willing acceptance of hierarchy will tend to stifle initiative among those who are happy to conform to the status quo* (p.210). Litrell (2002), citing Li (2000), found that employee empowerment seemed to be an effective motivator for Chinese employees in 72 manufacturing companies. The Asian cohort response is consistent with this conclusion. Both Australian and Asian cohorts have similar views on this item and so there is no implication that affects one group more than the other.

People should avoid making changes because things might get worse (Item 22) and *in business the short term bottom line result is the most important thing* (Item 23). These items related to planning and organizational skills, and to employees' freedom to make decisions. Although both cohorts disagree with these statements, Australian graduates took a more negative approach in both cases. Item 22 was strongly rejected by all respondents, but Item 23 was less strongly rejected by Australian graduates, and was narrowly rejected by Asian graduates. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) made a distinction between problem-solving managers and situation-accepting managers, and linked this with Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI). High PDI countries, such as Singapore, expect that managers should be seen as making decisions, and that employees fear to disagree with their bosses (Hofstede, 1980; Marx, 1999; Deresky, 2006; Ferraro, 2006). This approach was not evident in Asian graduates' responses to this item and, to this extent, indicates a changing perspective on the part of these graduates, with a viewpoint very similar to Australian graduates.

Item 23 was less clear-cut, involving both specific and diffuse relationship (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002) and strategic- versus short-term planning (Hofstede, 2004) issues. Asian responses to this item conform to diffuse relationship styles in which *management is a continuously-improving process by which quality improves*, whilst Australian responses are what can be expected from managers more used a specific relationship style in that *management is the realization of objectives and standards with rewards attached* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turners, 2002. p. 101). However, with regard to short- versus long-term planning, Hofstede (2004) postulated that *higher Power Distance Index (PDI) supports "political" rather than "strategic" thinking* and *higher UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index) makes it less likely that strategic planning activities are practiced* (p.382). Singapore has a high PDI but a low UAI,

whilst Hong Kong has both a high PDI and UAI (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). Asian graduates' responses to Item 23 indicate a preference for a strategic planning model, although to a lesser extent than do Australian graduates, and so do not conform to Hofstede's model. The implication from this finding is that Asian graduates are adopting a more Western management style.

Reading books and newspapers is an important way of remaining current in my profession (Item 34). This item was included in the survey to gauge the respondents' attitudes to life long learning. Graduates need to be aware of the need for continuous learning during their careers (DETYA, 2000), and lifelong learning skills are included in most university lists of graduate personal attributes (Hager, Holland, & Beckett, 2002; Hambur, Rowe, & Luc, 2002; NCVET, 2003). In terms of organizational change, *on going learning is believed to be the best preparation for the future* (Lakomski, 2001). An American survey (Yankelovitch Partners & Harris Interactive, 2001) indicated that 46% of respondents ($n=505$) considered that professional and trade magazines ranked as the top source of information for executives. Australian and Asian graduates agreed with this item and, although there is significant variation in their responses, both cohorts clearly believed that this issue is important. Their attitude is consistent with the thrust of the citations quoted above. However this item did not explore organizational responsibility for developing learning systems to meet the needs of employees for working knowledge (Hernes, 1999). This matter was covered in the case studies in Chapter 3.

As Hypothesis 1 is supported partially, findings are important in their implications for the RMIT logistics program. Analysis of survey results confirms that there is significant variation in Australian versus Asian graduates' attitudes to communication and teamwork issues. An additional finding relates to Asian graduates' attitudes to the importance of a short-term bottom line result, and to the exercise of initiative and enterprise. In both these issues, Asian graduates' responses are not consistent with earlier cultural studies, indicating that their management style is becoming more Westernized. Findings relating to graduates' work environment, and their appraisal of the RMIT logistics program, are discussed in the next section

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Australian and Asian graduates differ on their perceptions of their work environment.

An Independent-Samples *t*-test on a single factor, Work Environment: Supervisor Attributes, shows a nonsignificant variation between Australian and Asian graduates' responses to items in Part 3 of the GCQ and H2 is therefore not supported. This finding does not, however, imply that a similar environment exists in Australian versus Asian workplaces but, rather, that both cohorts have similar perceptions of their respective national work environments. Items in Part 3 are based on Chang (2001), the findings of which were reported in a paper dealing with competencies needed for managing a multicultural workgroup (Chang & Tharenou, 2004). A major conclusion of this paper was that the competencies needed are: *cultural empathy, learning on the job, communication competence, general managerial skills, and personal style* (p.57). Graduates' overall responses to the GCQ, including Part 3 are, in part, consistent with the findings of Hartel and Lloyd (2003), and Chang and Tharenou (2004).

Responses from both Australian and Asian graduates are generally positive, although *manager's refusal to explain actions* (Item 5) was strongly rejected by both cohorts. Graduates rated their managers more highly on management skills (e.g., flexibility and ability to deal with unfamiliar situations) than on cultural skills (e.g., understanding and awareness of cultural differences, ability to deal with unfamiliar cultural situations), implying that even in predominantly national environments, where cross-cultural issues are less likely to arise, graduates have reservations about their managers' cultural sensitivities.

Australian and Asian graduates' perceptions that their managers had better management skills in dealing with changing business conditions than cultural empathy with their subordinates indicates an attitudinal difference between older style managers and younger graduates of higher education logistics programs. Practical problems that Western managers encounter in dealing with Asian work practices are well documented (Redding, 1993; Lasserre & Schütte, 1995; Jones, 1997; Rabe, 1997; Blackman, 2000; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). However, the finding that Asian graduates' management styles are becoming more westernized indicates that the influence of national cultural differences may be decreasing, especially in disciplines such as logistics which have a global perspective.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *Australian and Asian graduates have differing perceptions about how well the RMIT logistics program covers generic capabilities.*

Graduates' responses relating to H3 cover three discrete areas: adequacy of the generic capabilities content in the logistic program, additional generic capabilities that should be included, and generic capabilities which could be removed. As there is no significant difference between Australian and Asian graduates' responses to these three issues, H3 is not supported.

Adequacy of generic capabilities coverage. Although there is a nonsignificant variation between both cohorts' perception of the coverage of generic capabilities in the logistic program (see Table 4.6), two issues are evident in their ratings, one being the mean rating in each capability, and the other the capability that Australian and Asian graduates rate lowest. Ratings overall indicate a basic level of satisfaction with generic capabilities coverage but, on 7-point Likert scales, absence of any rating above 5.7 indicate there are no features of the coverage that graduates think are outstanding. Lowest ratings differ, Australian graduates selecting Initiative and Enterprise, and Asians choosing Self Management. In general, Australian graduates rated program coverage of generic capabilities, such as self management and learning skills, which contribute to cultural empathy and effective interaction in multicultural societies (Shütte, 1995; Lloyd & Hart, 2003; DeSCo, 2003; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Chang & Tharenou, 2004) more highly than their Asian counterparts.

Additional generic capabilities required in the program. As Table 4.7 indicates, responses to this part of the GCQ were not high. However the pattern of responses is important, and is consistent with Australian versus Asian perceptions of program coverage discussed above. Most obvious is the observation that no Asian graduates felt that cultural aspects should be covered in the logistic program, whereas three of 13 Australian graduates made this suggestion. On the other hand, five of eight Asian graduates proposed that People Management should be given more prominence. Four of five categories covered by these responses: leadership, cultural, people management, and negotiation, are similar to those proposed by Tayeb (2003) as components of cross-cultural awareness programs, and by the DeSeCo (2003) as *key competencies for a successful life and well-functioning society* (p.1).

Generic capabilities which could be removed from the logistics program. Both Australian and Asian graduates' responses to this question are inconclusive, although there were 20 affirmative responses listing capabilities which should be removed. Of these, only two participants recommended that existing capabilities should be removed (i.e., learning, communication, initiative and enterprise skills). Other affirmative responses either did not list any capabilities, or included capabilities not in the GCQ list. As it seems that some respondents misunderstood this question, and because those listed capabilities suggested for removal are rated highly by other respondents (see Table 4.8), there is no significant trend to be seen in these responses.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *Australian and Asian graduates rank generic capabilities in different orders of priority.*

Graduates' rankings of generic capabilities (see Table 4.8) are based on their perceptions of the relative importance of each capability. In conformance with the research design, generic capabilities specified were those discussed in the ACCI/BCA (2002) report to DEST. There is a nonsignificant variation between Australian versus Asian responses to this item and, accordingly, H4 is not supported. Notwithstanding, in each cohort the top four skills are considered to be communications, teamwork, problem solving, and initiative, with the Asian cohort rating initiative above problem solving skills. These skills are very similar to the four skills: written communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal understanding (Ballantyne, 2001) identified by DETYA (2000) as important to Australian employers. These skills also fit into the broader key competencies framework proposed by OECD (2002): acting autonomously, using tools interactively, and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups.

Limitations

Limitations of this research relate to difficulties in obtaining responses from overseas graduates, incorrect and missing email addresses in the RMIT Alumni list, and non-inclusion of SIFT graduates in the survey. These limitations are discussed below.

In relation to overseas graduates' response rates, although well within the 19% to 62% range of response rates for web-based surveys listed in a Rand Corporation literature review of response rates (Schonlau, Fricker & Elliott, 2001), Singapore (46.4%) and Hong Kong (37.5%) were low compared with the Australian rate (81.8%). Reasons for these variations are not clear but anecdotal evidence indicates that Asian graduates are under considerable pressure at work, a point made by both an employer and a graduate interviewed in Singapore, and RMIT agents' comments. Some researchers have expressed concern about the extent of respondents' knowledge of, and experience with, electronic surveys (Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002), but graduates of the RMIT logistics program can be expected to be familiar with this technology. Completion rate of the returned surveys was high, only two being excluded for missing data, and no adverse comments were received about the questionnaire although a number of graduates appeared to misinterpret two questions. Hence the GCQ is considered to be reliable.

In regard to incorrect and missing email addresses in the RMIT Alumni list, the relatively small number (9.5%) of logistic graduates whose contact details were available from the RMIT Alumni List was a major problem, and was exacerbated by a number of incorrect addresses provided for Hong Kong and Singapore graduates. Currency and accuracy of graduates' details is likely to continue to be a problem for further researchers in this area, as responses to notices in Alumni newsletters were not encouraging in this research.

Finally, non-inclusion of SIFT graduates in the present survey is another limitation. As discussed at the start of this chapter, SIFT graduates were not included because of the newness of this program, and differences in program operation compared with Singapore and Hong Kong. However, the Shanghai program is now RMIT's largest logistics undergraduate off-shore program, including as it does both National Plan (government funded) and Society (full fee paying) students, and must be included in future research.

Implications of Study 2 Research Findings

Only one of four hypotheses was supported partially, *Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitudes towards work*. This finding conforms to current cultural models (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002; Adler, 2002; Deresky, 2006), but one area where Asian graduates' appear to be differing from these models is in their attitude to collectivism. Increasing industrialization and globalization encourages a more Western and individualistic management style (Hoecklin, 1995), where personal ambition becomes more important than group loyalty.

Open-ended question responses highlight the importance graduates attach to cultural diversity, but of concern is an equally strong feeling that not enough international content is included in the logistics program. Although graduates ranked communication, teamwork, problem solving, and initiative as most important generic capabilities, all received negative comment in terms of coverage in the program, and oral presentation and problem solving skills were seen as major deficiencies in graduating students.

A consistent theme in the survey responses was the difficulty that graduates encountered initially in handling a project from inception, through solution formulation, to actual implementation. As one graduate commented:

*The capacity to *actively* seek out change and become a "change agent" is something that I did not feel the course covered. Admittedly this would be a tricky one to cover as well. Often tertiary students become "institutionalised" by the education system. High school is a fairly certain place: everything is done a certain way and assignments are done to a set specification. Although what may be required can change, the format and process of acquiring that information does not change. Likewise in university, after the first year, it is easy to slip into "autopilot" and still excel academically because each subject is the same. There are several work assignments and an exam, only the precise theory differs... and the method of assessment is relatively standardised. When placed in a real life business situation you need to be able to get used to change and seeking it out... adapting to situations... performing tasks that benefit the organisation even though they might seem too hard or fiddly at first. This is especially so where data is concerned. I've changed quite a bit in*

terms of my tolerance for ambiguous or incomplete information, and my ability to use that partial picture to drive continuous improvement (Case 69, Australian).

Employers, on the other hand, are ambivalent about what degree of initiative and enterprise skills are appropriate in the first year of a graduate's appointment. This attitude of *learning from the bottom up* seems more pronounced in family companies than in big international organisations and MNCs. However, as the case studies in Chapter 3 demonstrate, large international private companies, and Country Offices of MNCs, also pose difficult adjustment problems for young managers. The results of this investigation indicate that the RMIT logistics program has some way to go in meeting the needs of young logistic graduates in these respects. In Chapter 5, results of Study 1 and Study 2 are collated, and final conclusions on the research are drawn.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The focus at the workplace needs to be on actions that increase the capability and performance of all employees. Good leadership will be about creating the circumstances in which all employees can deliver their best (BCA, 2005).

This thesis addresses the development of logistic graduates' generic capabilities in a context of employers' opinions of which generic capabilities are regarded as important; graduates' views on how well such capabilities were developed in their undergraduate logistic degree; and the importance that graduates attach to specific generic capabilities. An additional factor underlying this research is the increasing emphasis placed upon modern supply chain operations in a globalised economy (Stank, Keller, & Daugherty, 2001).

For the purposes of the present thesis, research methodologies involved both case studies and a cross-sectional survey. Survey participants are graduates from logistic programs undertaken over a period of seven years at RMIT University, with varying nationality, age, background, and work experience profiles. Case studies involved a series of interviews with managers from a range of public and private Australian and Asian organisations, not all of which had employed RMIT graduates. This chapter brings together employers and graduates' views of the current position in graduate generic capabilities development, in the contexts of organisational structure and a logistics undergraduate program. In previous chapters these two sets of views have been treated as discrete entities, and the intention of bringing them together in this final chapter is to arrive at relevant general conclusions, and to propose pertinent implications for theory, practice, and pedagogy.

Since the late 1950s, researchers (e.g., Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1980; Adler, 2002) have demonstrated considerable interest in interrelationships between culture and business. In particular, cultural dimensions established by Hofstede (1980) are still relevant (Tayeb, 2003), and inform much contemporary research in this field. Recent criticism of relatively older cultural

paradigms has focused on a movement by younger Asian managers away from a collective culture towards a more individualistic approach (Siu, 1997), and the extent to which knowledge management and organisational advantages of cultural diversity have been ignored (Holden, 2002).

Globalisation and internationalisation have become dominant features of world economy (Dunphy & Stace, 1990), and pose challenges for national education. In view of this, higher education policy relating to generic capabilities development should be framed in terms of how managers, and their organisations, manage culturally-diverse workforces in either national or international environments (Tung, 1996). Opinions vary on the extent to which intercultural aspects should be a basis for such generic capabilities development compared with, for example, personal attributes or key employment skills (ACCI/BCA, 2002; Chang & Tharenou, 2004).

Finally, a major issue in contemporary literature about cross-cultural business management is that many commentators do not include company ownership status (public or private), in addition to conventional criteria of organisational size, culture, and market orientation, in generic capability consideration.

As highlighted in this thesis, these issues, as well as those pertaining to knowledge management, cultural diversity, changing cultural paradigms, generic capability characteristics, and organisational ownership, are prominent features in both case studies and graduate survey findings.

Employers' views of important generic capabilities, and their expectations of graduates as junior managers, are an important aspect of eight organisational case studies comprising Study 1. Senior managers' rankings of generic capability priority are consistent in that *communication*, *problem solving*, *initiative and enterprise*, and *teamwork skills* are considered to be most important. Selection of these four generic capabilities was not influenced by organisational structure, ownership arrangements, or culture. The relative priority of each generic capability was, however, influenced by position and discipline (e.g., logistics or human resource management) of the particular manager carrying out the ranking.

A significant feature of all eight case studies is the weight placed upon organisational culture. Although national cultural characteristics, especially Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, are relevant they are not the only influences affecting organisational and intra-organisational culture. In four cases (e.g., Benedict) employees are expected to conform, as part of a business family, to founding family mores. In two other cases (e.g., Harrington) organisational culture appears to be a product of charismatic leadership, stemming from examples set by senior directors or managers. Regardless of how culture is developed, and what basic assumptions about appropriate behavior apply, graduates' assimilation into organisations depends, to a large extent, on how rapidly they can adjust to cultural aspects of organisational operations. This adjustment is more difficult in organisations where several different national or unit cultures are present.

Conflict between employers' requirements and graduates' expectations, especially in the area of management/employee relationships, also emerges as a reason for staff dissatisfaction and churn. For example, at senior management levels the Australian logistic industry remains male dominated, partly owing to a reluctance to accept women managers in operational line positions, culminating in a rapid turnover of female graduates, particularly in more traditional, usually family-owned, companies. These organisational cultural paradigms, in particular management characteristics of family companies, do not appear to be well covered in current cross-cultural literature, which emphasizes cultural differences based on nationality rather than ownership characteristics.

In organisations where intra-unit cultural differences exist, competitive advantage can be gained from such cultural diversity providing a system has been developed to manage knowledge existing in individual operational units. Knowledge management, the collection, recording, and dissemination of organisational knowledge, is a critical factor in a globalised economy (Holden, 2002). In only two of the case studies did there appear to be knowledge management systems in place, and these seemed to be informal rather than formal in nature. As noted previously, Holden (2002) criticized companies for ignoring the competitive advantages of cultural diversity, especially in terms of utilizing tacit knowledge existing at all levels of any organisation. Without a knowledge management system, tapping organisational cultural knowledge resources is not

possible. It is noteworthy that such knowledge resources involve not only information about national cultures but, as was evident in the present series of case studies, any knowledge relating to organisational practices or customer relationships.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Study 2 tests four hypotheses. These hypotheses opined that Australian and Asian graduates differ in their attitudes to work and work environments, to how well generic capabilities are covered in logistic programs, and rankings of generic capabilities. Only one of the four hypotheses, that Australian and Asian attitudes to work differs, was supported, albeit, partly.

On the basis of the present survey, two findings are inconsistent with the expectations espoused by extant cultural paradigms (e.g., Hofstede, 1980). The first is that both Australian and Asian graduates agree about the importance of work providing a challenge, and a sense of personal accomplishment. Although Australian responses are more positive on this item, a relatively high Asian response points to a changing attitude on the part of young Asian managers away from a collective approach (Hofstede, 1980; Adler, 2002; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002), towards a more individualistic approach. A second point is that Australian and Asian graduates' responses to an item on short-term versus strategic planning are almost identical. Hofstede (2004) asserted that, in organisations with a high PDI, organisational vision is more aligned with political than with strategic vision. If this hypothesis is still valid, a distinct variation in both groups' responses should have been evident. These two non-conformances with established paradigms can be attributed to Asian graduates becoming increasingly familiar with Western management styles, and pragmatic in their choices between Western and Asian management approaches.

The four most important generic capabilities, identified by both Australian and Asian graduates are *communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and initiative and enterprise skills*. These rankings are consistent with those of management (Study 1), and with DETYA (2000) categories of essential employment skills. However, in the opinion of the graduates, two of these skills, oral presentation and problem-solving, are not well covered in the logistic program.

A further consistent theme in graduates' responses is a reported difficulty that a number have in managing a project from inception, through solution formulation, to final implementation

Responses to an open-ended question seeking graduates' comments on generic capability development indicate the value that respondents attach to understanding, and managing, cultural diversity. There is an equally strong view that insufficient international content had been included in the logistics undergraduate degree. A need for graduates to have more exposure to project management and practical problem solving is stressed by a number of respondents, as was the importance of being able to present an argued case to a critical audience.

Summary of Findings of Study 1 and Study 2

Findings emanating from this thesis suggest that, regardless of the structure, size, and culture of organisations, *communication, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, and teamwork skills* are regarded as having highest priority by management and graduates. For the present thesis, linking development of generic capabilities; organisational structure, ownership, and culture; and managers and graduates' opinions on priorities accorded to individual generic capabilities was a different approach to that adopted in other cross-cultural studies, providing a matrix of rich data.

From a management perspective, the salient generic capabilities noted above have relevance only when they are demonstrated in particular organisational environments. This aspect of the present research leads into an area of management that appears to have been almost completely ignored in logistics programs. That area is the influences that ownership arrangements of organisations have on ways that new graduate management recruits are expected to behave. There is an expectation in family companies, where a close, diffuse relationship exists between management and employees, that graduates will conform, and disappointment when this does not happen. Usually this failure occurs because graduates' expectations are far more specific, with business and personal issues seen as separate worlds. In larger public organisations emphasis is on performance rather than conformance, with any overlap of business and personal life being less likely.

In this researcher's experience over 12 years as a logistic program leader, it has been the practice for logistic academics to alert students to cultural differences between Australian and Asian logistics organisations, although, in a number of cases, this position has been a rather perfunctory approach. What has not been made clear to students are differing views that senior management in family companies have of what is acceptable business behavior for junior (business) family members compared with views of senior management in large public organisations, and why these differences exist.

In the Australian transport industry, over two thirds of all trucks are in fleets with fewer than 10 vehicles. This sector might represent between 1500 and 3000 small enterprises, many of which are family controlled, even if they are employed as sub-contractors by larger operators (NOIE, 1999). In this industry environment, such an omission in preparing graduates for future management roles indicates a serious deficiency in curriculum design.

Finally, an aspect deserving far more attention in most companies is that of knowledge management. Although this factor this is particularly the case in multinational organisations with strong regional structures, it applies equally to Australian organisations that have either merged with or acquired their competitors, whether they operate in the international market or not. Knowledge management is emerging as a major competitive tool in a global economy, and is particularly relevant in logistics and SCM at all levels of market orientation (Callender, 2003).

Findings of this thesis have implications in three broad areas: theory, practice, and pedagogy. These implications relate to current paradigms in cross-cultural management theory, to industry practice as demonstrated in organisational attitudes and procedures evident in the case studies, and to positive and negative aspects of the logistic program as indicated by graduates' comments. There are major issues in all three areas which are significant for both industry and graduates, and these are discussed in the following sections. Relationships between each of these three broad areas are shown in Figure 5.1, providing a framework for subsequent discussion.

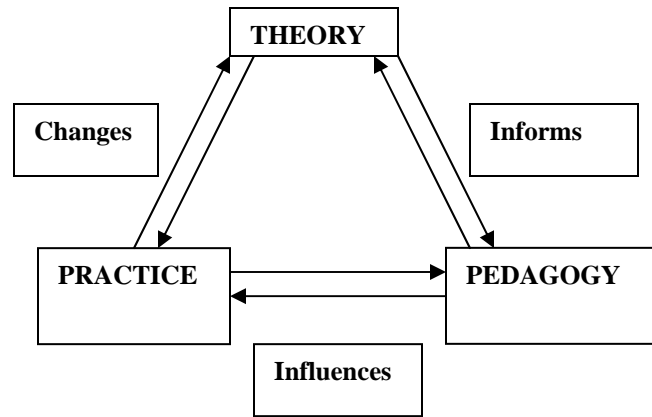


Figure 5.1 Relationships between Theory, Pedagogy, and Practice

Implications for Theory

A major theoretical implication of this research is that emphasis should be placed on ownership characteristics of organisations when company culture and management/employee relationships are under consideration.. In previous research (Adler, 2002), specific (i.e., Western culture) and diffuse (i.e., Asian) relationships appear to have been regarded as products of national cultural attitudes. However, diffuse relationships can equally well exist in Western family companies, as is evident in Study 1 case studies (e.g., Greythorpe). Graduates need to be aware that such relationships, in some situations, might require considerable emotional adjustment if assimilation into private companies is to be achieved successfully.

A further theoretical implication relates to the broader parent field for this research, cross-cultural management, and the immediate discipline field, generic capability development (Perry, 1998). In the broader cross-cultural management field, the most important theoretical implication is that economic, social, cultural, and political influences should be balanced. The DeSeCo Report (2002), for example, recommended that future generic capability research should concentrate on two more socially and culturally embedded competencies, *acting autonomously* and *functioning in socially heterogeneous groups* (p. 18).

In the immediate discipline field, generic capability development, there is a need to define more precisely what is meant by generic capabilities, given the varying views in contemporary professional literature of what constitutes personal attributes, key employment skills, and cultural empathic qualities. In this regard, the extent to which higher education institutions are able to develop students' personal attributes such as loyalty, sense of humor, and positive self esteem is arguable. This area of generic attributes development is ambiguous, and is adumbrated by vague, but well intentioned, lists of personal attributes, such as those identified in the ACCI/BCA (2002) report, that are impossible to quantify.

Turning to national cultural characteristics, two findings in this thesis indicate that Asian graduates are changing to a Westernised management style and, therefore, challenging existing cultural paradigms. The first finding is that Asian approaches towards management are becoming more individualistic, and the other is that strategic planning is considered to be more important than short-term bottom-line planning by both Australian and Asian graduates. Individual performance, and recognition of management ability, is a well-established tenet of achievement-based status in Western cultures (Trompennars & Hampden-Turner, 2002), and it is not surprising that Siu (1997) claimed that this was an important attribute of young Hong Kong managers trained in Western management styles.

However, the second finding regarding strategic planning poses a challenge to explain. On one hand, Hofstede's (2004) research indicated that in high PDI countries, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, organisational planning was more aligned with political than with strategic planning. On the other hand, in his earlier research (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), he asserted that in time-orientation, CHC countries tended towards long-term, strategic planning, and valued thrift and perseverance. To add a further layer of complexity, other cultural paradigms contend that Western management styles are short-term in time orientation (Hofstede, 1988), and that in North America and Western Europe *time is a valuable and limited resource; it is to be saved, scheduled, and spent with precision lest we waste it* (Deresky, 2006, p. 98). On this basis, one would expect Australian graduates to have a short-term time-orientation, as was a feature of management policy in one major Australian family company.

To summarise, both Australian and Asian graduates demonstrate a number of cultural characteristics that do not conform to existing paradigms but, in general, findings of this thesis do not support a claim that extant cultural paradigms are limited. However, from a theoretical perspective, increased emphasis should be given to organisational ownership, and the different cultures that apply in public and private companies regardless of nationality. A further issue is that social, political, economic, and cultural influences should be given due weight.

The next section of this thesis discusses implications of research findings for the Australian transport and SCM industry. As a preliminary comment, it has been this researcher's experience, based on more than 40 years acquaintance with the Australian transport industry, and more recently as Chairman of the Education and Training Working Group of a major Commonwealth Department of Transport and Communications (DOTC) logistics study (DOTC, 2002), that this is an industry that is slow to accept change. For this reason, it is unlikely that all, or indeed any, of the findings of this research will have a significant impact in the short-term. However, relative priorities for implementation have been indicated, taking into account the practicalities of such implementation occurring.

Implications for Practice

For the transport industry, there are three major implications of the present research findings relating to industry culture, knowledge management, and management expectations in private and public companies.

Industry culture is probably the most intractable current issue in the Australian transport industry. As the case studies indicate, in general the Australian transport sector is aging, male dominated, and reluctant to employ women in operational line positions. It is also an industry with a demonstrated *need to attract good people, get young people into the industry* (Lovel, 2005, p.3). Despite this need, the transport industry has difficulty in attracting young employees, in particular young female employees, owing to an image of freight transport as dirty and old-fashioned. This problem has a potential to impact negatively on Australia's economic and social future. For this reason, actions to remedy this situation are imperative, and require

much closer attention to links between the transport industry (practice) and tertiary institutions (pedagogy) than exist at present (DOTARS, 2002).

In the transport sector small enterprises are common, but depend on large companies for continuing clients (NOIE, 1999). Given the nature of competition in this industry, it is understandable that short-term, bottom-line productivity is a criterion by which junior management is assessed. This criterion is unlikely to change in the immediate future because, as one manager of a transport company pointed out, profit margin in his company was less than 5%. However, changes are necessary to transport industry attitudes towards women managers, and to how junior managers are mentored and assessed, if best use is to be made of the theoretical knowledge of new graduates.

The SCM area is not beset by the same graduate recruitment problems as confront transport companies because, generally, such organisations are larger, and women graduates tend to gravitate towards those companies, or to consultancy firms, such as KPMG, which specialise in SCM. As several of the case studies indicate, women are prominent in SCM senior management in Europe and the USA, and this situation is beginning to flow on to SCM international and multinational organisations in Australia and Asia as globalisation and internationalisation become increasingly dominant. However, a continuing barrier to increased opportunities for women to achieve senior management status in national SCM organisations is that most Australian logistics and SCM organisations, other than consultancy firms, began life as transport companies. Consequently, a management philosophy based on a premise that senior managers must have operational management experience precludes many female logisticians from higher management positions in these organisations.

Knowledge management, as a source of competitive SCM advantage, is still undervalued in many organisations, as was evident from both Holden's (2002) criticism, and from comments by senior managers interviewed in this research. From an industry practice viewpoint, such a situation is untenable in a global economy. Part of this problem, at national, international, and MNC levels, is a tendency by management to adopt a silo-like mentality towards culturally-diverse operational units within single organisations.

As was discussed earlier, such cultural diversity can be either nationally or organisationally based. Case studies reported in this thesis indicate that such a silo approach can have one of two results. Where cultural diversity is nationally based, organisational culture, in an MNC for example, may be dictated by senior management in geographical regions, and so one regional culture might differ substantially from that of other regions. Alternatively, where cultural diversity is a result of operational units in single organisations having different company cultures, possibly as a result of multiple acquisitions, a head office attitude of *they know their job best* might prevail. Again, a result can be that culture in one, or more, operational units vary from that of other parts of the same organisation.

There is nothing necessarily divisive about having different national or organisational cultures embedded in a single organisation. On the contrary, such a situation can improve competitive advantage. However, to achieve such an advantage, a knowledge management and dissemination system is necessary.

On the basis of this research it is evident that such arrangements are rare, and advantages inherent in such systems not apparent to management. This is an unexpected finding in research involving SCM organisations, in a discipline where *silo mindsets are incompatible with turbulent environments* (Lysons & Farrington, 2006, p.161), and represents a breakdown in both Practice/Pedagogy and Practice/Theory links.

Finally, a major implication of this research for theory development is that organisational ownership, and its influence on management culture, should be given more emphasis. This issue is one of the major findings of this thesis, and has been discussed in detail previously. It is not intended to repeat that discussion but, rather, to point out that, in two major family company case studies, employers and graduates' expectations appeared to be at odds. Such a situation indicates a very poor, almost non-existent, link between pedagogy and practice, and should be a matter for concern. It is also one possible reason for problems the transport industry is having in attracting high quality graduates.

In terms of relative importance of the above implications, industry culture and links with higher education institutions are areas which require the most attention if present human resource problems in the transport industry are to be overcome. Resolving these issues depends to a large extent on strong Practice/Pedagogy links. Implications of the research findings for pedagogy are addressed in the final section.

Implications for Pedagogy

Implications of research findings for pedagogy relate to cultural paradigms, value of cultural diversity, understanding of transport and SCM industry culture, and pedagogical links with theory and practice. As in the previous section, relative importance of analyses of implications of the research findings is indicated in a final summary.

As noted earlier, findings emanating from Study 2 demonstrate that Australian and Asian graduates are becoming more alike in their preferences for individual rather than collective patterns of behavior, and for strategic rather than short-term planning approaches. Since current logistic and SCM theory emphasizes strategic planning, the second finding is understandable. However, a difficulty with the first finding on changes in Asian graduates' attitudes to individualism and collectivism is that data are not available to show whether findings would have been replicated had the same survey been administered to students completing logistic undergraduate programs. From a pedagogical viewpoint, this point raises two inter-related questions. First, should such findings be incorporated into logistics programs? Second, can an assumption be made that Asian students, as well as graduates, are tending towards a more individualistic approach to such generic capabilities as problem-solving and teamwork?

Because Asian graduates' responses tend to confirm what other researchers (Siu, 1997; Li, 2001) have reported about a trend towards individualism, it would be prudent to incorporate such a paradigm shift in logistic program curricula. However, it does not necessarily follow that Asian graduates and students share similar attitudes toward individualism and collectivism. Students might be influenced by other than work-related issues, for example, a need to adopt a collective style of living with other students of the same culture/nationality for economic and social

reasons. Consequently, it would be inadvisable to discount the importance of collective cultural characteristics when working with students of Asian backgrounds. This area of individual versus collective cultural dimensions has pertinent implications for knowledge management, and optimization of cultural diversity, in mixed Australian and Asian student classes.

Class interaction, and the presence of students from different cultural backgrounds, was identified by graduates as an important part of their university experience. At the same time, negative comments were made about lack international content in the logistics program, and insufficient emphasis on problem solving, oral communication, and presentation skills. Such negative comments can be traced, in part, to a knowledge management problem similar to that discussed in the previous section. Cultural diversity of the student body is not being tapped to engender an international approach to learning, and to disseminate tacit knowledge of different cultural approaches to similar logistics and SCM situations.

The main reason for this is that, unless arbitrarily allocated, Australian students tend to remain in groups that they have been in throughout their logistics program, in some cases for several years. Asian students find it difficult to assimilate into such groups and, consequently, form their own groups. Apart from the observation that such arrangements do little to enhance student interaction, this attitude does not provide a solid foundation for future cross-cultural management practice. After graduation, students are most unlikely, in early stages of their career, to have freedom to pick and choose which work teams they will join in an organisation. It seems incumbent, therefore, that in a final year of logistic programs, allocation of students to groups should mirror industry practice.

An arbitrary group allocation, controlled by logistic academics, would also ensure that appropriate cultural mixes are achieved. Objections to such an allocation system are generally based on individualistic arguments that, because group assignments are part of assessment procedures, students should be free to join groups which maximize their opportunities to achieve high marks. However, for the development of cross-cultural communication and teamwork skills, for knowledge management reasons, and because such arrangements prevail in industry, a more collective approach seems desirable. To counter individual mark optimization arguments,

there is a need to adjust group assessment methods to give more emphasis to processes than simply to outcomes, and to use such collective assignments as tests of generic capability skills as well as of logistic knowledge.

Turning now to pedagogical links with practice, and with theory, a major issue discussed in the previous section was an apparent weakness in links between practice (business) and pedagogy (academia). Although there was no explicit research data indicating that a similar weakness existed in the opposite direction, pedagogy with practice, at the same time there was no evidence in either Study 1 or 2 that such links did exist. Industry support for, and involvement with, undergraduate programs is essential if such programs are to have credibility with potential employers of logistic graduates.

Equally, academics involved in logistic programs should be seen to be part of the transport and SCM industry either through their links with appropriate organisations and government bodies, or by membership of professional associations. Finally, industry support is very much dependent on the extent of recognition that logistic programs receive from their parent institutions. In this researcher's experience, an environment of little or no program recognition by Faculty and University authorities makes it very difficult for logistic coordinators to engage industry's interest in academic programs.

The link between pedagogy and theory at logistic undergraduate program level is predominantly one-way, with logistic curricula relying heavily on texts produced in the USA and the UK. Although a number of higher education institutions (e.g., the Transport Research Centre in Sydney and Monash universities) have centres specialising in transport and SCM research, these are at postgraduate level. Little theoretical research done at undergraduate level appears to be translated into program content. Although this issue was not part of the research objective for this thesis, it is part of a triangular relationship depicted in Figure 5.1, and so is noted in this section.

To summarise pedagogical issues, two major issues are evident from the current research findings. First, Australian and Asian graduates' attitudes towards individualism, and long- versus

short-term planning, represent paradigm changes which should be included in logistic program curricula. Second, group assignments are a sound basis for developing class cross-cultural interaction and development of knowledge management systems, as well as providing scope for generic capabilities assessment. However, these group assignment advantages require an allocation system which ensures that appropriate cultures are represented in each group, and an assessment system which focuses on processes as well as outcomes.

Two other issues emerge in discussion of the model presented in Figure 5.1 relationships. Research findings suggest that practice and pedagogy links are weak. Although no explicit findings indicate that the reverse link (pedagogy to practice) is strong or weak, the implication is that a similar situation to that of practice to pedagogy exists. This is a serious problem and should be addressed. The other issue relates to relationships between pedagogy and theory, and an apparent absence of any theoretical changes in logistic curricula emanating from academic research at undergraduate logistics program level. Findings are not available to support a conclusion on this issue as it was outside the bounds of the present research objectives.

Further Research Projects

The discussion of theory, practice, and pedagogy raises issues that require further research for two main reasons. First, they are issues that have emerged during analyses of findings related to original research findings and, therefore, were not dealt with during research covered by this thesis. Second, although a number of issues were identified, and findings relating to them were analysed in the preceding sections, it is evident that those areas of research are important in their own right, and so require more intensive investigation than was envisaged at the beginning of this thesis. Research projects that fell into one or other categories are listed below in their specific theory, practice, and pedagogy categories:

Theory

- Analysis of research output by academics in undergraduate logistics programs, and the impact of such research on logistics theory development.

Practice

- Analysis of knowledge management systems in national, international, and multi-national organisations
- Study of present links between undergraduate logistics programs and the logistic industry.

Pedagogy

- An extension of the present research methodology to include the RMIT/SIFT program.
- A survey of Australian and Asian final year students to determine their views on generic capabilities development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis set out to determine employers and graduates' views on rankings of generic capabilities, the extent to which organisational and cultural aspects influence such rankings, and, probably most importantly, what graduates consider to be the strong and weak points of generic capabilities development as experienced during their logistic program. These research objectives are an extension of a view, formulated by this researcher almost a decade ago, that it was not sound pedagogical practice to regard all students in a logistic program as being similar in attitude, ability, and cultural orientation.

One could raise a rhetorical question at this point and ask, based on the findings of this research, whether anything has changed since the mid-1990s? Unfortunately, a realistic answer is, not much. Certainly, employers and graduates' findings on important generic capabilities are consistent, and graduates' opinions about their logistic program generally supportive, but with some important qualifications. However, there is still a lack of understanding of the advantages that can be gained from using cultural diversity as a powerful competitive weapon in a world that is becoming increasingly globalised.

A major finding of this research, and one which does not seem to have been considered by mainstream cultural researchers, is what appears to be a large attitudinal gap between aging senior

managers in family companies, and Generation X and Y graduates, in terms of conflict of aspirations, and in turnover of junior management staff.

As a more general conclusion, logistics and SCM is too important to be relegated to the status of a minor discipline, which higher education institutions can use as a balancing mechanism to cushion impacts of changing student demographics and government funding. However, if industry wants high quality logistic graduates, a much stronger case must be made by government and employers than has been done hitherto. The theory-practice-pedagogy links are critical, and findings of this research indicate that there is a long way to go before these relationships can be said to be satisfactory from either a national or international level.

To revert to the quotation at the head of this chapter, the concept that *good leadership will be about creating the circumstances in which all employees can deliver their best* (BCA, 2000) is as applicable to industry as it is to the higher education sector. Both have a responsibility to contribute to the achievement of a high level of international recognition of Australian logistic programs. If such recognition is not forthcoming, graduates will be disadvantaged in seeking employment, industry will not receive the standard of graduates necessary for international management positions, and international students will look elsewhere for their programs.

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Cross-Cultural Management Interview Questions

1. COMPANY CULTURE

- a. How would you describe your company culture?
(Culture= the way a group of people solve problems.)
- b. When did the present culture become established?
- c. Why did the present culture take the form that you have described?
- d. Has the culture changed in the past ten years?
- e. Why has it changed (or has not changed)?
- f. Has your company culture been a significant factor in your performance:
-In the domestic market;
-In the international market?
(Please explain how/why it is or is not a significant factor)

2. CULTURAL ORIENTATION

Which of the following statements best describes your company:

- a. People achieve better results when they work alone and are personally responsible for their results.
OR
- b. People ideally achieve in groups and share collective responsibility.

- c. A deal is a deal.
OR
- d. As relationships evolve the initial arrangements of a contract (deal) may become more flexible.

- e. The best way for management to ensure compliance is to issue clear and detailed instructions.
OR
- f. Employees should be allowed a certain amount of personal freedom in interpreting instructions.

- g. Most senior managers are male, middle aged and selected for their position because of their background and experience.
OR
- h. Most senior managers vary in age and gender and are selected because of their technical proficiency.

3. EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

- a. Please rank the attached list of graduate capabilities, prepared by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of Australia, in what your company would consider to be their relative order of importance in selecting an Australian graduate for a management position in Australia.
 - b. Are there any other graduate capabilities which your company considers to be important which are not included in the attached list?
 - c. Would your ranking change if you were:
 - . Interviewing an Australian graduate for an overseas posting in your company?
 - . Interviewing an international graduate for a position in your company in Australia?
 - . Interviewing an international graduate for a position in your company in an overseas location?
-

Thank you.

KEY SKILLS

- a. Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employers and customers.
- b. Team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes.
- c. Problem solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes.
- d. Initiative and Enterprise Skills that contribute to innovative outcomes.
- e. Planning and Organising Skills that contribute to long term and short term strategic planning.
- f. Self Management Skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth.
- g. Learning Skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and
- h. Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.

(Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) & Business Council of Australia (BCA) Report, 2002, p 7).

Table 3. Concept Matrix-Organisational Characteristics and Top Four Generic Capability (Gen Cap) Ranking									
Org	Case#	Inter-viewee	Org Size	Location	Org Type	Ownership	Culture	Manage Style	Gen Cap Ranking
ALTIC	1	Dir HR (See Note 1)	Large	Singapore	MNC	Public	Project oriented Bureaucratic Specific	Top down	4 5 2 3
ALTIC	1	VP Log	Large	Sydney	MNC	Public	Project oriented Bureaucratic Specific	Top down	4 2 7 3
Hogan and Wilson	2	Dir Log	Large	HK	MNC	Public	Role oriented Bureaucratic Specific	Top down	3 7 2 1 See (Note 2)
Benedicts	3	MD	Large	Melbourne	National	Private	Person oriented Family Diffuse	Top down	1 4 3 5
Benedicts	3	GM	Large	Melbourne	National	Private	Person oriented Family Diffuse	Top down	3 1 2 8
Cranson	4	Dir	Large	Melbourne	National	Private	Person oriented Family Diffuse	Collaborative	3 1 2 4
McCabe	5	Dir	Large	Melbourne	Internat'l	Private	Role oriented Bureaucratic Specific	Top down	1 2 3 8
Darragh	6	Dir Fin	Large	HK	MNC	Private	Role oriented Bureaucratic Diffuse/Specific (See Note 1, 3)	Top down Collaborative	8 3 5 7
Harrington	7	GM HR	Large	Melbourne	Internat'l	Public	Project oriented Egalitarian Specific	Top down	8 3 1 4
Greythorpe	8	MGR HR JC (See Note 4)	Small	Melbourne	Internat'l	Private	FulfillmentOriented Individualistic Diffuse as above	Collaborative	3 1 2 4
Greythorpe	8	MD	Small	Melbourne	Internat'l	Private	Diffuse as above	Collaborative	1 7

Appendix 3.2

Note 1	Legend: Dir=Director; HR=Human Resources; VP=Vice President; Log g=Logistics; ; JC=Junior Consultant; MD=Managing Director; GM=General Manager; Fin=Finance; MGR=Manager.
Note 2	Generic Capabilities: 1. Communication Skills; 2. Team work skills; 3. Problem solving skills; 4. Initiative and Enterprise skills; 5. Planning : and Organising skills; 6. Self Management Skills; ; 7. Learning Skills; 8. Technology Skills.
Note 3	Depends on the particular Country Office and national culture.
Note 4	MGR HR ar d JC were interviewed together.

Appendix 3.3

Plain Language Letter-Interview Participants

February 2004

Dear Participant,

I am currently a Doctor of Education student in the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT University. My thesis topic is *The development of graduate capabilities in logistic graduates: coping with cultural differences*. This study proposes to investigate the development of generic capabilities, capabilities other than specific technical ability, of graduates of the RMIT Logistic Management Degree Program. It also analyses the extent to which capabilities displayed by present graduates of this program equip them to work as efficient logistic managers in different cultural and organisational environments. My supervisors are Professor Kosmas Smyrnios and Associate Professor Heather Fehring.

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve an interview on topics related to my research which will not exceed one hour. A preliminary written brief on the topics to be discussed will be provided. There is minimal risk involved in this research. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

The data collected will be analysed for my thesis and the results may appear in publications. The results will be summarised in a manner which does not enable you to be identified. Thus the reporting will protect your anonymity. The summaries will be kept in hard copy and on disc in my office in a secure cabinet. Access to your data is available on request. At the end of the project in 2004 all data will be archived at RMIT for five years.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact my supervisor Professor Kosmas Smyrnios, phone 03 9925 1633, email kosmas.smyrnios@rmit.edu.au or the Chair of the RMIT FELCS Ethics Sub-committee Associate Professor Heather Fehring, phone 03 9925 7840, email heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au.

Yours Sincerely,

Geoff Christopherson

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Generic Capabilities Questionnaire

RMIT Undergraduate Logistics Program – JANUARY 2004

T
Home
• Our
• E
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Dear Participant,

I am a Doctor of Education student in the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT University. My thesis topic is The development of graduate capabilities in logistic graduates: coping with cultural differences. This study proposes to investigate the development of generic capabilities, capabilities other than specific technical ability, of graduates of the RMIT Logistic Management Degree Program. It also analyses the extent to which capabilities displayed by present graduates of this program equip them to work as efficient logistic managers in different cultural and organisational environments. A list of the generic capabilities and their definitions are provided in the questionnaire. My supervisors are Professor Kosmas Smyrniotis and Associate Professor Heather Fehring.

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve the completion of the attached questionnaire which will take approximately half an hour. There is minimal risk involved in this research. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime. As this research focuses on non-technical capabilities, the questionnaire is equally applicable to graduates in logistics and non-logistics appointments.

There are five parts to this questionnaire. Please answer Parts 1 to 5 by either selecting the most appropriate response, or by completing the answer in area indicated.

The data collected will be analysed for my thesis and the results may appear in publications. The results will be summarised in a manner which does not enable you to be identified. The summaries will be kept in hard copy and on disc in my office in a secure cabinet and will be retained at RMIT for 5 years. Access to your data is available on request.

If you have any queries regarding this project, please contact:

- *Supervisor*
Professor Kosmas Smyrniotis
Phone: 03 9925 1633
Email: kosmas.smyrniotis@rmit.edu.au
- *Chair of the RMIT FELCS Ethics Sub-committee*
Associate Professor Heather Fehring
Phone: 03 9925 7840
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au
- **Geoff Christopherson**
Phone: 03 9885 1035
Email: geoff.christopherson@rmit.edu.au

Please complete the questionnaire by 27 February 2004.

Would you like an email copy of the summary of the Questionnaire:

Your Email Address: @

Sincerely,

14/11/2005

Geoff Christopherson

Thank you for your cooperation

Notes for completing the Questionnaire:

1. When filling in your responses, please either complete the details in the box provided, select the most appropriate response from the pull down menu, or on the scale provided indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.
2. If you make a mistake, there is a RESET button at the bottom of the Questionnaire.
3. Once you have completed the Questionnaire, please select the SUBMIT button at the bottom of the Questionnaire

**Part One
Background on Person Completing the Questionnaire**

(Please either fill in the details or select the most appropriate response from the pull down menu.)

1. What is your age? years
2. What is your gender?
3. What year did you complete the B.Bus, Transport and Logistic Management program?
4. What is your nationality?
If 'other' please specify
5. What do you consider to be your ethnic background?
6. Have you undertaken any further study since you graduated from the B.Bus Transport and Logistics program?
If yes, was the study:
and what was the primary field of study?
7. What is your job title?
8. What is the nationality of your supervisor?
If other please specify
9. How long have you been in this job? years.
10. In which country is your job located?
11. Have you worked in a country other than your own since graduating from the RMIT Logistics program?

If so, where?
How long?

**Part Two
Participant's Attitude to Employment**

(On the seven point scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.)

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
1. In order to have efficient work relationships it is often necessary to bypass the hierarchical line of control.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. Employees should participate more in decisions made by management.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. Working in a different cultural environment would present no									

difficulties for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. It is not a good idea in business meetings to completely reveal what you are thinking or feeling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. I am comfortable working in teams with people who do things differently because of their culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. Managers should be careful not to ask subordinates for their opinions too frequently otherwise the manager might appear to be weak and incompetent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. There is nothing wrong with a person making decisions for a team if the decision is the correct one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8. It is important for a person to have considerable freedom to adopt their own approach to work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
9. All members of a work team should be treated equally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
10. People ideally achieve in groups which assume joint responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
11. If a defect is discovered in an operation that was carried out by a team, and is due to negligence of one of the team members, the responsibility should be carried by the team as a whole.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
12. Individuals should be careful about showing too much initiative because the results may be damaging to the team's welfare.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
13. Group success is more important than individual success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
14. Problems are best solved by experts with specialised knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
15. Achievement or success in solving problems is the only legitimate source of status in business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
16. I prefer to be able to solve my own problems and assume responsibility for the results.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
17. I get the recognition I deserve when my initiative results in a good outcome for my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
18. It is important to me that my work is challenging and that I get a sense of personal accomplishment from what I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
19. My managers know more than I do so I tend to concentrate on their views rather than rely on my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. The organization I work for values enterprise and initiative and is willing to listen to my suggestions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Plans should be evaluated in terms of future benefits rather than on their fit with customs and tradition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. People should avoid making changes because things might get worse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. In business the short term bottom line result is the most important thing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. It is better to make a decision based on insufficient information than not to make a decision at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Innovation and change is justified by economic results rather than by social and cultural traditions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Building of relationships and market position is more important than short term gain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. It is better to give people the opportunity to learn on the job rather than concentrate on picking the perfect match for a specific position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Whether I like it or not, I can see that further education is for me a good way to get a well paid or secure job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. The opportunity for a great deal of day to day learning in a job is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. People work for extrinsic money awards and for the positive regard and support of their colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. I feel that any topic can be highly interesting once I get into it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Good employees maximize their time at work so they learn as much as possible about their jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. I usually become increasingly absorbed in my work the more I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Reading books and newspapers is an important way of remaining current in my profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. There are several perspectives on reality relative to each participant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Part Three
Participant's Work environment**

(On the seven point scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.)

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1. My supervisor is aware of my cultural traditions and practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My supervisor is adaptable and flexible to doing things in different ways when dealing with me and my workgroup members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. My supervisor understands that I may do things differently because of my culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. My supervisor can deal with unfamiliar situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My supervisor refuses to explain his/her actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. My supervisor tries to understand the differences between cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. My supervisor can handle unfamiliar situations when dealing with cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. My supervisor is willing to take time to find out about why I may do some things differently because of my cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Part Four
RMIT Undergraduate Logistics Program**

(This Section deals with the extent to which the RMIT Undergraduate Logistics Program met, or did not meet the requirement to provide Graduates with a grounding in generic capabilities other than specifically technical capabilities.)

A listing and a brief description of each of the generic capabilities is provided below:

1. *Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employers and customers.*
2. *Team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes.*
3. *Problem solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes.*
4. *Initiative and Enterprise Skills that contribute to innovative outcomes.*
5. *Planning and Organising Skills that contribute to long term and short term strategic planning.*
6. *Self Management Skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth.*
7. *Learning Skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and*
8. *Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.*

(Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) & Business Council of Australia (BCA) Report, 2002, p 7).

(On the seven point scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.)

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
1. Communication Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Team work Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Problem Solving Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Initiative and Enterprise Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Planning and Organising Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Self Management Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Learning Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Do you think that there are generic capabilities, other than those listed above, which should have been covered in the RMIT logistics program?

If yes, what are they?

9. Do you think any of the listed generic capabilities should not be covered in the RMIT logistics program?

If yes, what are they?

10. Please rank the list of generic capabilities in Questions 1 – 7 in what you believe are their order of importance (i.e. 1 = highest importance):

**Part Five
General Comments**

(Please indicate to what extent the RMIT Logistics Program prepared, or did not prepare you for employment in international or cross-cultural management appointments.)

Thank you for your cooperation

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Note: Fields marked by a star * must be completed. Fields marked by an at symbol @ must be a valid email address.

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Plain Language Letter- Survey

13 February 2004

Dear Participant,

I am currently a Doctor of Education student in the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT University. My thesis topic is *The development of graduate capabilities in logistic graduates: coping with cultural differences*. This study proposes to investigate the development of generic capabilities, capabilities other than specific technical ability, of graduates of the RMIT Logistic Management Degree Program. It also analyses the extent to which capabilities displayed by present graduates of this program equip them to work as efficient logistic managers in different cultural and organisational environments. My supervisors are Professor Kosmas Smyrnios and Associate Professor Heather Fehring.

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve the completion of a questionnaire which will take approximately half an hour. There is minimal risk involved in this research. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime

The data collected will be analysed for my thesis and the results may appear in publications. The results will be summarised in a manner which does not enable you to be identified. Thus the reporting will protect your anonymity. The summaries will be kept in hard copy and on disc in my office in a secure cabinet. Access to your data is available on request. At the end of the project in 2004 all data will be archived at RMIT for five years.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact my supervisor Professor Kosmas Smyrnios, phone 03 9925 1633, email kosmas.smyrnios@rmit.edu.au or the Chair of the RMIT FELCS Ethics Subcommittee Associate Professor Heather Fehring, phone 03 9925 7840, email heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au.

Yours Sincerely,